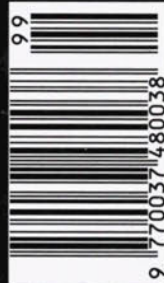


Sight and Sound

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to Chubby Brown

DARK LAUGHTER
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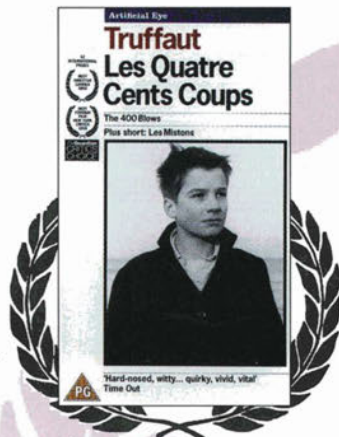
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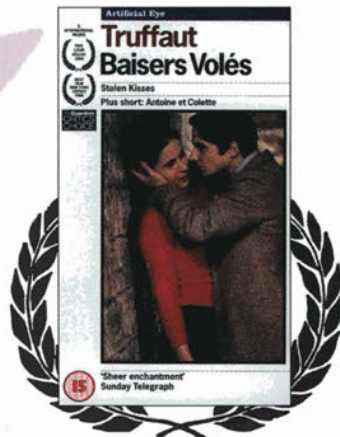
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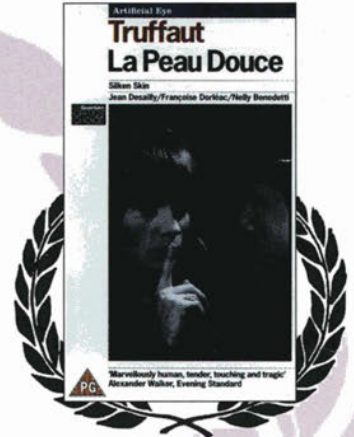
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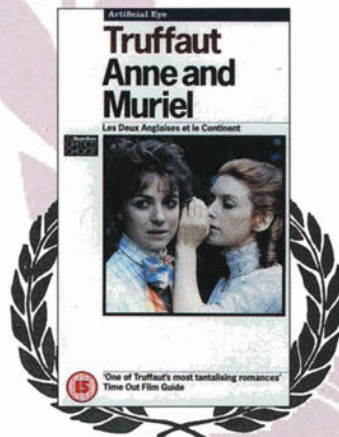
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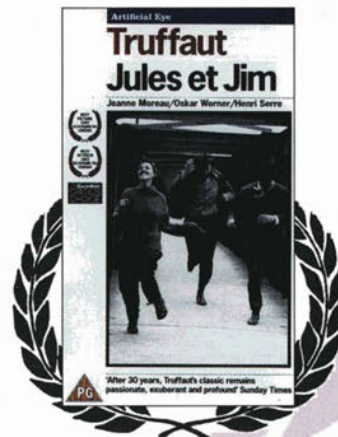
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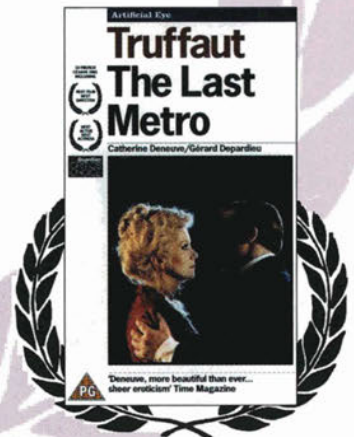
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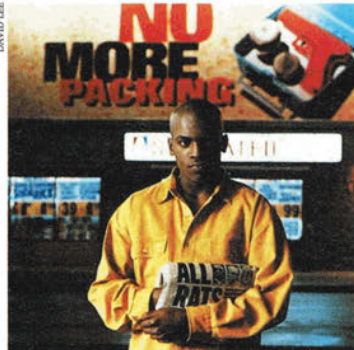
October 1995

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DAVID LEE



'Clockers': 45

AUSTIN MORRISON



'Carrington': 32

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'The Wild Bunch': 24, 62



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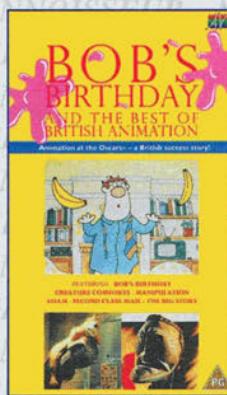
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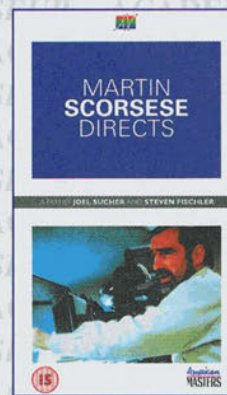


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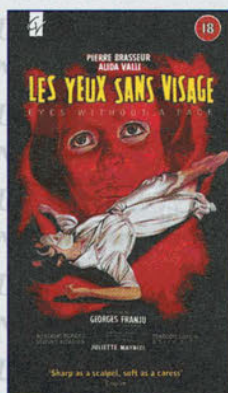


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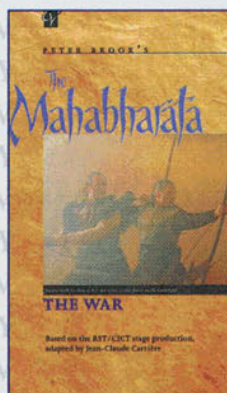
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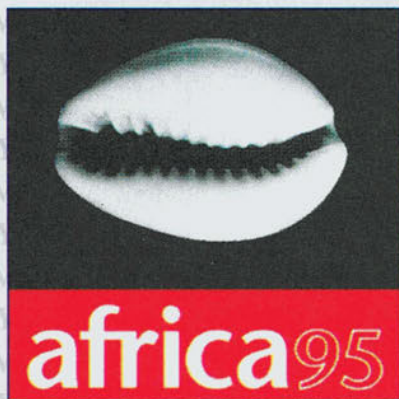


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England calling

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Although it may seem like a dream refracted through Lord Attenborough's teardrops, seven British films are being released, at a rate near one a week, through the autumn. Each of the films in question – *Butterfly Kiss*, *Blue Juice*, *Land and Freedom*, *The Young Poisoner's Handbook*, *Carrington*, *Funny Bones* and *The Neon Bible* – has its supporters among critics and reviewers.

So far no one has suggested that there is anything beyond coincidence – or perhaps distributors' attempts to outguess each other's marketing campaigns – to be read into this flurry of releases. As yet no ideological or generational argument has been put forward to pretend that these films have a single identity. But before some tired reviewer suddenly starts arguing that they have such an identity and drafting the obligatory feature carrying the strapline, *The British are coming (again)*, it's worth considering that the received idea of British cinema might be past its sell-by date and that it is better to think in terms of, say, English and Scottish cinema.

The signs of this are most evident in Scotland, where the move towards political autonomy is complemented by an awareness not only of a specifically Scottish literary culture but also of a Scottish film culture (which would include John Grierson as much as Bill Douglas). The Scottish Arts Council is a major player in this process and has recently pledged £1 million worth of National Lottery money to help make the most expensive feature film in Scottish cinema history. Budgeted at £6.5 million, *Poor Things* is a retelling of the Pygmalion story, adapted from the novel by Alasdair Gray, to be directed by Sandy Johnson, best known for his television work on *Roughnecks*. Even the Scottish Nationalist Party has suddenly become aware of the power of cinema and has seized on Mel Gibson's *Braveheart*, co-opting the latter's crude nationalistic fervour for its own ends. Despite the fact that the film is effectively an American venture, the SNP is using an image of Mel Gibson as William Wallace on recruitment leaflets distributed to cinema audiences promoting the cause of Scottish independence.

With this context in mind, it may well be best to think of the autumn slew of films as examples of an

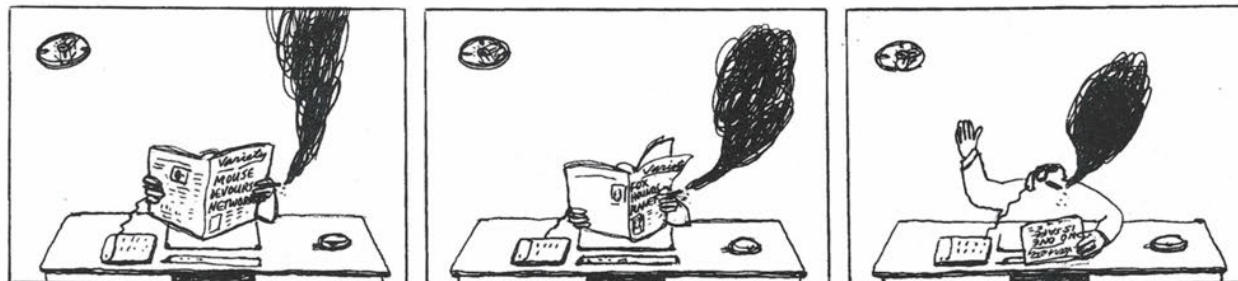
English rather than British cinema. No one can doubt that most of them are enquiries into the condition of England. This is most evident in *Butterfly Kiss* where the two woman protagonists – serial killer and acolyte – aimlessly roam the motorways of the North West of England before lighting upon the Camelot theme park near Morecambe. Just as telling is the fact that the song that Amanda Plummer is searching for throughout the film turns out to be New Order's 'World in Motion', the theme for the England World Cup team of 1990.

But to say that Winterbottom's *Butterfly Kiss* is engaged with Englishness is not to forget that it is also a close cousin of such US films as *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer* and *Thelma and Louise*. And in its dialogue with American cinema, *Butterfly Kiss* is at one with the other films to be released, most of which seem to define an English identity as living in the shadow of America. This is most obvious in the case of Terence Davies, who uses the American writer John Kennedy Toole's *The Neon Bible* to transplant his Liverpool childhood experiences to the American South, as if to put them closer in touch with the Hollywood cinema he loved as a child. But it is equally the case with the ambitious *Funny Bones*, where Lee Evans' disturbed Blackpool comic is redeemed from a violent past by the discovery of an American-raised half-brother in search of his own Blackpool roots. But Englishness for both Davies and Peter Chelsom is something mired in a nostalgia for a vanished world. And that is at least as much the case with regard to Ken Loach's *Land and Freedom*, with its attempt to resurrect the tradition of English socialism committed to a fascist free Europe (it is entirely predictable that the baddy in Loach's film is an American; there is American money in both *The Neon Bible* and *Funny Bones*).

What many of these films conjure up or allude to is an old white England or Europe (far removed from the wonderfully mongrel Europe of Salman Rushdie's new novel *The Moor's Last Sigh*). It is possible to admire some of these new films, to recognise some of the nostalgia they call up, to be touched, particularly by *Funny Bones*' conjuring of an energetic and vulgar England, and yet to hope that these films are the end of some England rather than the beginning.

JERRY ON LINE #1

Peter Lydon – James Sillavan ©



'Jerry, I told them I didn't want to end up running a faceless media corporation 25 floors up some glass tower. "I'm a studio man" I said, "I live for the smell of the backlot, the hum of overpaid talent...". So they doubled the offer and threw in the whole 26th floor as well.'

The business

● The winter before last, I came out of a screening of *Shopping* with a couple of stalwarts of the British film culture business. They seemed to have been quite enjoying the film while it was on. But, afterwards, their faces said it all. Bloody multiplex generation again! All flash and no content!

Now there are lots of films Mr Busy would take pen up to defend before *Shopping*. But it did seem to me that what it set out to do, it did pretty successfully. New Line Cinema in Los Angeles obviously thought so too, because they promptly hired its director, Paul Anderson, to handle one of their biggest movies to date, the film version of the *Mortal Kombat* game.

The hunch paid off: opening with massive publicity in the US at the end of August, the film took almost \$50 million in its first two weeks, providing the box office with its only real hit of the second half of the summer. This makes Anderson the first of the multiplex generation actually to do what they supposedly set out to, since Danny Cannon's *Judge Dredd* has performed below expectations almost everywhere except in Brazil, and Vadim Jean's *Clockwork Mice* did most of its business on the art-house circuit.

As for the multiplexers' highest-profile precursor, Richard Stanley (*Hardware*, *Dust Devil*), things have gone from bad (*Dust Devil*, after protracted hassles, was rereleased as a 'Director's Cut' onto video) to worse: on 8 August, he was abruptly removed from *The Island of Dr Moreau*, a movie based on his own script which he had begun shooting in Australia with an all-star cast – Marlon Brando, Val Kilmer – just three days earlier.

The source of conflict was apparently not the Great One, but Kilmer, who reportedly takes his profession very seriously indeed (perhaps to persuade fellow actors that he didn't get to be a star by wearing a latex Batsuit) and is notoriously difficult on set. A week later – after a few disagreements with Brando – 65-year-old John Frankenheimer took over the film.

Regular readers will know that this column has been quite excited about all the corporate upheavals going on in Hollywood this year. Further seismic changes took place in August. First, following all the rumours that top talent agent Mike Ovitz would be going to take over at MCA, he didn't. Instead, entirely unprecedented by rumours of any kind, Ovitz's CAA co-founder Ron Meyer took the job, and promptly delivered a huge deal to CAA client



Cute Bonet: Bill Cosby and Lisa Bonet in 'The Cosby Show'

Sylvester Stallone, who keeps being paid enormous amounts of money despite not having a hit since 'Cliffhanger'.

The big bombshell was yet to come, however. Disney chairman and chief executive Michael Eisner suddenly announced, on 14 August, that Ovitz was to become president of the Walt Disney Co., a post which has remained vacant since the death of Frank Wells on Easter Sunday, 1994. Effectively, Eisner had been doing both jobs since then – which was one of the reasons Jeffery Katzenberg left to set up DreamWorks with Steven Spielberg and David Geffen.

A little earlier that month, Disney also bought US television network ABC for \$19 billion, pushing the Mouse House up to the very top of the media business, with assets of \$50 billion and an annual turnover of \$17 billion, way ahead of Sony and Time Warner. So I don't expect they really mind too much about all those horrible things people keep saying about Uncle Walt.

● Flipping through the late-night cable channels recently, I came across a screening of Herzog's *Nosferatu*, which looked distinctly better in retrospect than it did (if memory serves) in 1979. Perhaps that's because one could admire what was good about the film (its sheer brio, the late Klaus Kinski at his most awe-inspiring, pictured far right) rather than succumb to the trendy boredom that the late-70s glut of Herzog movies tended to induce.

Glut is not the word you would use these days, so it is with rather guilty pleasure that I can announce that *The Conquest of Mexico*, an English-language epic Herzog has been trying to set up for over a decade, finally got (most of) the backing it needed in July. All things going well – which they rarely do on a Herzog film – production should start in September 1996.

The backers are Coppola's company, American Zoetrope, and the National Geographic's film unit, set up 18 months ago, but with no films yet taken on board. Herzog's most recent comments on the project, which relate to the number of extras that you can create with computer technology (he says 30,000, but then he has always dealt in

hyperbole), caused some confusion about the total cost. Herzog was reported as saying he would need \$40 million in his hand just to start, but now claims he said \$20 million.

The film – which looks like being a kind of companion piece to *Aguirre: Wrath of God* – will tell the story of the conquest of Mexico from the Aztecs' point of view. So no comedy.

Speaking of comebacks, here's another. Seven if regular viewers of daytime Channel 4 could be forgiven for thinking it wasn't necessary. I speak of *The Cos*, once the king of the US entertainment business but now, three years after he left 'The Cosby Show', somewhat in need of a hit.

Any British viewer who actually enjoyed the Channel 4 showing of Cosby in the remake of that old game-show favourite 'You Bet Your Life' should not expect the fun to go on much longer, since the programme lasted only a season in the US. Another television series, 'The Cosby Mysteries', which Mr Busy vaguely remembers seeing dubbed into German, didn't last much longer.

But now, before you can say so much as "I don't believe it!", The Cos is due to return to sitcom with a project based on 'One Foot in the Grave'. He will play a man in retirement, fighting constant battles with bureaucracy – presumably a refocusing of the Victor Meldrew syndrome to take into account Middle America's loathing of "government".

And that's not all: the 58-year-old actor, whose movies – notably 'Leonard Part 6', so bad even Cosby warned audiences to stay away, and 'Ghost Dad' – have been, to put it mildly, disappointing, is even now at work on a new film, 'Jack', with Robin Williams.

Directed by Francis Ford Coppola, it began shooting on 18 September in San Francisco, and tells the story of a boy (Williams), who was born in 1985 but whose body ages four times faster than his mind (for those who were never much good at maths, that makes it about Williams' age by now).

Cosby plays Jack's tutor, Mr Woodruff, and is reportedly receiving only \$500,000 – a twelfth of what he got for 'Ghost Dad'. "He's doing it because he loves the role," said a spokesman for his agent, who clearly knows how to turn necessity into a matter of principle.



Far from armless fun: 'Mortal Kombat'

● Liv Ullmann, undaunted by the problems surrounding her epic movie, *Kristin Lavransdatter* (this column, March 1995), which was premiered in August at the Norwegian Film Festival at Haugesund, is now at work directing what is effectively the third part of an Ingmar Bergman trilogy which began with *Den goda viljan* (*The Best Intentions*), the movie-cum-television series directed by Bille August in 1992, and continued by *Söndagsbarn* (*Sunday's Children*, 1992), a movie directed by Bergman's son Daniel, which is reportedly much better but has yet to be seen here.

The new series, a five-parter tentatively entitled *Confessions*, is a *Bridges of Madison County*-like story about an extramarital affair which Bergman's mother Anna had, which was only discovered in her diaries after her death. Produced by Swedish television, it boasts a bevy of Bergman regulars, including the admirable Pernilla Ostergran, who played Anna in *The Best Intentions*, together with Max von Sydow and old Bergman friend and associate Sven Nykvist behind the camera.

Confessions will be broadcast on Scandinavian television next



Cute bonnet: Franco Zeffirelli's 'Jane Eyre'

Christmas. But following the distinctly disappointing business done by the theatrical release of *The Best Intentions*, there are no plans for a movie version to be made.

Genre-spotters will have noticed that, while both the Western and the keep-watching-the-skies sci-fi movie seem to have made successful comebacks recently, the Hollywood musical has been effectively dead for at least two decades.

Those who said that cynical times could not

support the idea of a world where people keep bursting into song are in for a shock: three big ones are in the works.

First out – in American cinemas around Thanksgiving – will be a big-screen version of 'The Fantasticks', apparently the most popular show ever on the US stage. Directed by Michael Ritchie, it stars Joe McIntyre, Joel Grey and Jonathan Morris and, judging by US trailers, is very much "the real thing" as musicals go.

Born of a different age – and already

mentioned on these pages – is Alan Parker's movie version of 'Evita', set to star Madonna and Antonio Banderas. And finally – though it is only a rumour at this stage – the next Woody Allen film to go into production (his latest, *The 'Mighty Aphrodite'*, premiered in Venice) is also reported to be a musical.

● Some of you may recall that, amid the general euphoria surrounding Sir Dickie's *Gandhi*, there were a few reservations expressed about it on the subcontinent. Now, 13 years later, veteran Indian Director Shyam Benegal is at work in South Africa on *The Apprenticeship of a Mahatma*, a co-production between the SADC and the Indian NFDC, which focuses on Gandhi's experiences in South Africa as a young lawyer – a period only touched on in the Attenborough epic, but which reportedly defined both the Mahatma's political ideas and his philosophy of non-violence. Gandhi is being played by Rajit Kapur.

If you want to do something for Italian film culture, you might like to try boycotting a Franco Zeffirelli movie (the next – a version of 'Jane Eyre' starring William Hurt, Charlotte Gainsbourg, Anna Paquin and Elle Macpherson – will be along shortly).

You might want to do this as a tribute to the Taormina Film Festival, which has a fine tradition of launching minority movies of the kind that Cannes and Venice tend to overlook.

Held every year in July, the Festival almost didn't happen this year, following budget cuts imposed by the new hyper-conservative administration and a general unwillingness to allow proper planning.

Zeffirelli's connection with all this? He is a local senator for the extreme right-wing *Allianza Nazionale* and has been reported to be very interested in the job of festival director. Of course, you might also want to boycott a Zeffirelli movie on grounds of taste...

● Finally, this summer has been a bad time for babes. Unconfirmed reports on the Pamela Anderson movie, *Barb Wire*, suggest production problems and completion is in serious doubt. While the US release keeps getting put back on Cindy Crawford's starring debut *Fair Game*, originally due early August, now put back to 27 October. Fine-tuning, redubbing or reshooting? Whichever, we're going to have to be very good and wait till they're ready.

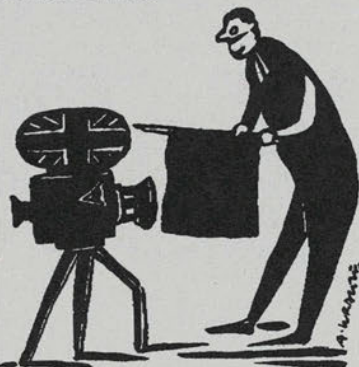
MADRID NOTES

Knowing your onions

The Madrid premiere this April of Ken Loach's *Land and Freedom* represented the ultimate test of how work by British film-makers is received in Spain. Here was a film by a known polemicist, with subject matter – the Spanish Civil War – that runs so deep in the Spanish psyche that they have barely come to terms with it themselves. How would they react?

They reacted well. *Land and Freedom* has grossed over 100 million pesetas at the Madrid and Barcelona box office. As an Anglo-Spanish co-production, it appears to be part of a trend of British successes in Spain. According to statistics released by the Spanish Film Institute, the 121 British films released in Spain during 1994 achieved a total theatrical gross of pta3.8 billion – marginally more than their Spanish counterparts did on two-and-a-half times the number of releases. This put Britain second only to the US in terms of both revenues and number of admissions. The same again in the first five months of 1995, with a pta1.1bn gross and two million admissions from 38 releases. It appears that the Spanish have an insatiable appetite for British product.

Or do they? Delve beneath the statistics and some interesting factors emerge. Firstly, needless to say, the ubiquitous *Four Weddings and*



a Funeral is mainly responsible for the upsurge, the fourth highest grossing film in Spain in 1994, outperforming *Schindler's List*, *True Lies* and *Philadelphia*. Its success ensured that Spanish independent distributor U Films was the seventh most successful distributor that year.

But it only accounted for 31 per cent of the total British gross. What are the others? Quaintly, the Spanish national classification considers a film's director more of an indication of nationality than its financing sources or production company. So such undeniably US films as *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* (pta318m) and *Interview With the Vampire: The Vampire Chronicles* (pta252.4m) were recorded as British. Co-productions with some or nominal British involvement, such as *Sirens*, *In the Name of the Father* and *Death*

and the Maiden are also rendered British. And all performed well in Spain during 1994 or early 1995. Ironically, two films where the British do have a genuine claim as co-production partners, Jim McBride's *The Flemish Board* (aka *Uncovered*) and the aforementioned *Land and Freedom*, are deemed wholly Spanish. Yet Spanish distributors believe British films to be popular with Spanish audiences, forcing them not only to acquire more British films, but also to develop co-production slates with UK producers. U Films' Jaime Comas says that audiences love British films because of their reputation for quality and fine acting – something often lacking in Spanish films. In September, independent distributor Araba Films released Nicholas Hytner's *The Madness of King George*, and it has Spanish rights to Angela Pope's *Captives*, Anthony Hopkins' *August* and Franco Zeffirelli's *Jane Eyre*. Manuel Calvin, Araba's marketing manager, says his company is now considering investing in Anglo-Spanish co-productions. Meanwhile *Land and Freedom*, which received raves in the Spanish press, has revived interest among Spanish film-makers in the Civil War. Director Vicente Aranda says that *Land and Freedom*'s success helped him to get Civil War drama *Libertarias* into production. *Benedict Carver*



BFI STILL, POSTERS AND DESIGNS

UNHINGED INVENTION

Andy Medhurst revels in the comedy 'Funny Bones', and his love of Thora Hird over Tarantino



● *Funny Bones* is a film about (deep breath) applause, belonging, betrayal, Blackpool, copyright, genetics, imperialism, nationality, necrophilia, plunder, redemption and risk – and if I list those in purely alphabetical order that's because any other kind of order is conspicuously missing. It's a mess, a sprawl, a runaway train of a film, but there's something marvellous about its reckless, impossible ambitions. You can't help but admire the way it works, like the insane acrobats of its climactic circus scene, without a net. After all, when was the last time a British film with more ideas than it knew what to do with came bowling into your local multiplex?

It's easy to accuse its director, Peter Chelsom, of trying to do too much, but think how refreshing and preferable that is, in an era when most British films try to do nothing at all beyond lining pockets and reinforcing prejudices. We live in a cinematic culture where something as coy, computer-cold and soulless as *Four Weddings and a Funeral* can pass itself off as a great comedy, and in so reprehensible a climate the semiotic profligacy and the sheer gutsiness of *Funny Bones* deserve every encouragement. Nobody interested in the traditions, the ramifications and the possibilities of British film humour can afford to miss it. It may lack the single-minded intensity of Scorsese's *The King of Comedy* (a film it shares certain thematic concerns with, as the casting of Jerry Lewis explicitly signals) but it does show what rich – if erratic – pickings can be had by looking instead at some of comedy's serfs.

Nevertheless, it is likely to struggle to find an audience, since it is that rarest of things, a British film which asks intellectual questions. It's an exploration of and a disquisition on the morality of slapstick, yet it also wants to be funny at the same time, to anatomise comedy while keeping the gags flowing thick and fast. This is a case of trying to have your pie-in-the-face and eating it, and the consequent balancing act causes the film to buckle and break at times, with certain characters and plot-lines left stranded and under-developed, but equally there are moments of rare and thrilling complexity, where both ideas and images dazzle.

It follows the journey of Tommy Fawkes (Oliver Platt) from Las Vegas – which he flees after dismally blowing his big break as a stand-up comic – to Blackpool, a town which holds both happy childhood memories and the promise of fresh material he can buy up and take back home to bolster his career. Blackpool is soon buzzing with news of an American in town with dollars to burn, and in a wonderful audition sequence, out come the freaks. All manner of carnival eccentrics, woeful has-beens and deluded wannabes parade before Fawkes – drag unicyclists, singing dogs, virtuosi of the musical saw – it's a Rabelaisian *Opportunity Knocks*, but he sees little he could transfer to Vegas.

Only the Parkers, two aged clowns (George Carl and Freddie Davies) and the young Jack Parker, seem worth investigation, but when Fawkes sees their slapstick routines he angrily accuses them of stealing their material from his father George, a star in the United States. The truth is a reversal and a revelation – it was George (Jerry Lewis), visiting Blackpool in the 1950s, who stole it from the Parkers and rose ►

Waving, not falling: Lee Evans as Jack, in the circus ring.
left: Tommy Fawkes.
failed comedian, top right: George Fawkes (Jerry Lewis) with his former lover (Leslie Caron) and wife, second from top: Evans and Caron, second from bottom: Jack's uncles, bottom

ALEX BAILEY (5)



◀ to success on the back of the theft. If that does not damage Tommy's image of his father enough, it also emerges that Jack Parker (British comedian Lee Evans) is actually George's son and thus Tommy's half-brother. Worse still, the real comic talent (albeit with an unsettling manic edge) is Jack, not Tommy. The difference between them is the film's core issue, the difference between those who exude comedy from their very being and those who can elicit laughter by delivering well-prepared material. The latter can be funny, the former just *are* funny – 'funny bones' comedians.

I warned you this was a film with intellectual ambitions. The distinction here is that between Essentialism and Constructionism, as featured in recent academic debates about sexuality: where the first sees sexuality as innate and natural, the second regards it as historically specific and socially constructed. However, *Funny Bones* seeks to test out these same polarities in the field of comedy. So Jack is the funny-bones comic, generating comedy through sheer physical presence, funniness incarnate, while Tommy has to work at it, never a natural. There are some telling moments when Jack tries to pass on his skills, and here the film becomes an unusual genre: the backstage comedy. Perhaps it should have been called *A Stoooge Is Born*.

Tommy, furthermore, is reliant on material written by others, a cracker of gags, polished but

hollow, while Jack's acts are either his own unhinged invention or drawn from a deep well of comic tradition. Tommy, if you like, is Bob Monkhouse or George Burns while Jack is Tommy Cooper or Harpo Marx. It's the contest between comedy as mockery (or what the makers of Ealing comedies once referred to as their "mild rebellion"), and comedy as anarchy, those deepest and darkest recesses of the comic imagination where laughter always threatens to congeal into a scream. Jack has already reached this point when younger, having deliberately taken a slapstick act beyond metaphor and into reality by actually killing a fellow performer, the audience hysterically encouraging him. He has seen the comic heart of darkness and consequently retreated into a defensive shyness that borders on insanity, where gormlessness has become tinged with psychosis.

This too offers rich allusive possibilities. Evans' success to date has been founded on a shrewd reworking of Norman Wisdom's persona. Shorn of cloying tendencies towards sentimentality, Wisdom remains a major reference point here: like Jack, like Harpo, he was the innocent abroad, the holy fool that is such a resonant, enduring comic archetype. *Funny Bones* is not shy about layering Jack's character (and Evans' performance) with such cultural reverberations. Jack has elements of Chaplin, of Stan Laurel, of Michael Crawford's Frank Spencer, of

Robin Williams' Mork from Ork and of Mr Bean – holy fools one and all. Moreover, by having Jack climb Blackpool Tower while a plane flies overhead, the biggest destructive innocent of all is invoked: King Kong. Jack is somehow beyond human, and this is further underlined by the affinities suggested between his moment of murder in search of the ultimate laugh and the delirious violence we all adore in cartoons – just imagine, *Funny Bones* boldly asks, if what Tom does to Jerry happened in real life...

Tom and Jerry do lock horns in this film, as Tommy (Platt) and George (Lewis) argue out the meaning of comedy. It's a rather too obviously pivotal scene, where the distinction between doing funny and being funny is explicitly verbalised as they spar on Blackpool beach, with Oedipal echoes: son confronts father. Neglected, as in most Oedipal stories, is the mother – it's a major problem with *Funny Bones* that it remains such a male narrative, endorsing the unfortunately widespread view that comedy is some kind of boys' club. Jack's mother (and George's erstwhile lover) is played, in one of the film's many enticingly unusual casting decisions, by Leslie Caron, but despite a neatly performed song and a lavishly tongue-in-cheek circus routine, she's given little to do other than be maternally wise. Elsewhere, women are strikingly absent – George has a suitably overdressed Vegas wife, and Tommy has a girlfriend he dumps (in

ANDY MEDHURST ON EIGHT BRITISH COMICS IN THE CINEMA

GEORGE FORMBY

Next time some earnest Film Studies lecturer assures you that stars are composites of idealised sexual types, think of George – and try not to laugh too hard. Has an uglier man ever been the subject of so many loving close-ups? Where are you supposed to look as the Formby teeth twinkle and the ukulele fingers fly? Why don't those gathered round him rise up as one to stuff his uke down

his throat? I don't know. I'm a fan. But Formby is still the test case of vulgar British comedy for modern audiences. He can seem gratefully obvious and artless, but a closer look proves him impressively deft. The victim as hero, the chump as champ, the eunuch as would-be stud – the little-man archetype, dipped in the candyfloss-and-vinegar tang of seaside innuendo.



NORMAN WISDOM

No other comic has ever leaned quite so heavily on the trope of clown-as-child as Norman Wisdom. There's a scene in his first film, 'Trouble in Store', when he has the free run of a well-stocked drinks cabinet, but vigorously shuns the adult world of whisky and gin – "none of that stuff... lemonade for me." And lemonade it stayed, a decade of box-office success from

the mid-50s to the mid-60s that served up an instant, fizzy sweetness but rarely quenched any deeper thirsts. In small doses he could be an absolutely inspired clown, losing all physical control while submerged in surging, infectious laughter, and the moments in his films that stand up well are those where he punctures stuffiness and demolishes decorum, but the need to

sustain 90 minutes of Norman entailed the risk of extending him beyond slapstick. This path had two branches – firstly, Wisdom as a neutered Formby, pining after and by the end improbably winning the female lead, but while George was well aware of (if inexperienced in) the demands of the bedroom, Norman's greatest carnal ambition was a peck on the

cheek; secondly, overcooked pathos, since Wisdom had contracted an unusually virulent dose of Chaplinitis. That his hold on British affections remains strong is clear from the way any third-rate impressionist can get a laugh with a quick "Mr Grimdale!", but Wisdom's mushy soft-centredness denies him a secure place in the comic top drawer.



the first reel, after she's served her narrative function of establishing his heterosexuality) but no others significantly clutter the lads' landscape of the film.

Jack's relationship to sexuality is difficult to establish. In one respect his lack of any identifiable desire fits well with the innocence of the fool tradition. But differently inflected the fool can be a goatishly libidinous figure (think of Harpo, or the trouble King Kong's lusts got him into). And a third option is androgyny (Chaplin and Laurel's penchant for drag is relevant here, as is Frank Spencer's curious un-queer effeminacy). Indeed, in *Funny Bones* the androgyny card is played during Lee Evans' big scene, the one where we all need to be convinced that talk of Jack's genius is not just hype. His solo act consists of miming to spliced-together sound extracts that are played through a radio to give the illusion of rapidly switching channels (sports commentaries, operatic singing, lurid melodramas). It's a blinding *tour de force*, an inter-textual karaoke, establishing Jack's inventiveness, timing and eagerness to take alarming, outlandish, electrifying risks. Many of the voices he mimes to are female, sending his elastic face and contorted body ricocheting between genders as well as genres. At this point masculinity is just another mask.

In general, however, Jack is as thoroughly unencumbered by issues of sexual identity as the

Blackpool is a funny-bones resort, belching excess from every pore, while Las Vegas can put on a good show but has no heart

film of which he is the core, since (in a somewhat wilful snubbing of the box office) *Funny Bones* resolutely refuses to provide a romance. The only consummation Jack chases (which he wants so badly he has killed for it) is that between performer and audience, thereby underlining the fact that the presiding sensibility of *Funny Bones* is not erotic, but antic.

Nonetheless it's a film brimming over with love, the love of comedy, and more precisely of traditional, lowbrow, English comedy. American actors may be in attendance (a sadly necessary concession to economic realities) but the heart of *Funny Bones* is in Blackpool: Chelsom sees Vegas as too groomed for its own good. By contrast Blackpool still has its carnival roots showing, its dark side still visible, its Victorian grotesqueness still there for those who know where to look. It's a funny-bones resort, belching excess from every pore, while Las Vegas can put

on a good show but has no heart.

Blackpool is also England simultaneously personified and parodied, a point the film makes with one of its slyest jokes, letting George turn on the riotous fireworks of the Illuminations several hundred years after another man called Fawkes failed to illuminate London with a similar set of bangs and flashes. *Funny Bones* is a love letter to Blackpool's unrepentant sea-side culture, and this championing of tatty Englishness makes me welcome it with particular warmth. To explain exactly why requires an anecdotal detour. At the end of last year I was taken, somewhat against my will, to see *Pulp Fiction*. I expected to hate it (fearing the worst from the way all those frustrated-director, straight-white-boy, pop-culture-train-spotter critics had drooled all over it) and wasn't disappointed, though the source of my hatred was annoyingly hard to locate. It wasn't just that I have a low tolerance threshold for film directors whose only mode is undisciplined, adolescent self-admiration; it wasn't just the raging homophobia; it wasn't just the depressing moral and political vacuum of its post-modern self-referentiality. There was something else wrong, which I couldn't pinpoint. Until, that is, we got back to my friend's house and turned on the television, and there was *The South Bank Show* tribute to Thora Hird. All fell into place. As Thora strolled along Morecambe prom I realised this was where I ▶

MORECAMBE AND WISE

Morecambe and Wise's small-screen brilliance did not survive into their films (as below, *The Magnificent Two*). Many lament this, but on reflection it's baffling that anyone ever thought it could. The genius of their television work, its pace, warmth and playfulness, depended upon the illusion of liveness, that their programmes were variety performances taking place on stage. The feel was one of spontaneity, their comedy never more delicious than when the script was monkeyed with, when they or their guests began to corpse, when the buzz of anything-could-happen was

in the air. Film, by such standards, is a poor dead medium: fit only for pickling rather than tickling. Besides, when they made them, they hadn't even peaked as comics, with their great early-70s years at the BBC still ahead of them. It was probably these shows which finally laid to rest the illusion that British comics hadn't really made it until they'd done a movie, which proved that television, not cinema, was the suitable vehicle for their sensibility, and which spared us the undignified spectacle of flops starring Ken Dodd, Tommy Cooper or Michael Barrymore.



TOMMY TRINDER

Ebullience epitomised, this cock-sure comic was hard to like, but impossible not to admire. He was not over-endowed with charm, but compensated by ruthlessly browbeating audiences to concede that, while a right pain in the backside, he was nonetheless a skilled milker of laughs. There's no sense of anarchy in Trinder's world,

none of that threat of gloriously imminent social collapse the greatest funny-bones comedians instil, but there is technique galore, a polished delivery in which every gag is directed unerringly towards the bullseye. This rather chilly ability earns him his place here, the representative of those comics like Arthur

Askey, Ted Ray, Bob Monkhouse and Jimmy Tarbuck for whom comedy is a matter of formal accuracy rather than emotional risk. Trinder's most interesting moments came during the Second World War. He appeared in dramas like Ealing's *The Bells Go Down* as the living spirit of East End indefatigability. (What

chance did the Luftwaffe have against his ceaseless patter and rolling strut?) He kept the home front laughing with set pieces from his stage routines like the alarming Carmen Miranda skit pictured above (from *Fiddlers Three*), and embodied the essence of the Victorian music hall itself in *'Champagne Charlie'*.

◀ belonged: this imaginary landscape played host to my most intense cultural identifications, and whatever they called hamburgers in France was a trifling irrelevance compared to the taste of good fish and chips. I'm just too English for *Pulp Fiction* to matter to me.

Arguing for the superiority of Thora Hird over Quentin Tarantino might, of course, come across as needlessly perverse and woefully parochial, but the fact remains that because of the Englishness she and I share she means more to me than he ever will. This isn't a question of their relevant talents (no, she couldn't have directed *Reservoir Dogs*, but he'd make even more of a mess of an Alan Bennett monologue); nor is it to damn all American culture as inferior to English (without Montgomery Clift or Diana Ross or *Friends* my life would be immeasurably poorer); and it certainly isn't to ignore how complex and contentious a category like 'Englishness' obviously is – but it is to argue that national specificity remains an important factor in how we respond to texts. Even though the quickest way to get an academic work published today is to ensure the title contains not just "globalisation" but also "hybridity", I want to wave a small flag for those areas of popular culture that remain stubbornly national, those areas whose cultural co-ordinates remain almost impossible to translate, pre-eminent among which is vulgar comedy.

This film originates in a universe where Federico Fellini gave up those arty films to come and work at the Blackpool Tower

It could be argued that slapstick and physical clowning cross national barriers with ease, and indeed *Funny Bones* boasts as one of its less resolved plot-lines a crew of French fishermen who (alongside Leslie Caron) introduce a European dimension that complicates the film's Anglo-American binary. But the parts of the film that resonated most for me were the celebrations of specifically English humour. These coalesce in the casting of Freddie Davies as one of the Parker brothers. Youthful readers (Taranteenies in particular) will have to trust me on this one, but Freddie Davies played a large role in the comic upbringing of 30somethings like myself. As Freddie 'Parrot Face' Davies he was a slapstick mainstay of children's TV. Equipped with an outsize bowler hat, a lisp that produced a tidal wave of spittle and a recurring, obsessive interest in budgerigars ("boodgieth" would be the usual reference), he was a clown to be reckoned with, and

seeing him in *Funny Bones* left me suffused with a glow that I'm as powerless to analyse as I'm embarrassed to report. I thought nobody but me cared this much about the obscurer byways of British comedy history, but in Peter Chelsom I may have met my match.

That doesn't of course, excuse all of *Funny Bones*' errors of judgment. The casting is bold and beguilingly unhinged – Oliver Reed as a Lancashire Fu Man Chu, anyone? – but some of the acting is charmless and limp. The milking of the theme of pathos in comedy is predictable (we've all heard enough about the tears of clowns), and it seems at times damagingly unsure of which audience it wants to reach. But beyond such shortcomings you'll find a hearteningly all-or-nothing folly of a film, one which is unafraid to place its borrowings from Joseph Conrad next to its homage to Wilson, Keppel and Betty, which tips its hat equally to Buñuel and the Crazy Gang, and which originates in a parallel universe where Federico Fellini gave up those arty films to come and work at the Blackpool Tower Circus with his second cousin Charlie Caroli. And isn't it impossible not to warm to a film where the cast list includes Shane Robinson as the Bastard Son of Louis XIV, Benjy Ming as Plastic Cup Smasher, and Dave Flame and the Barbarians as Themselves?

'Funny Bones' opens on 29 September and is reviewed on page 49 of this issue



BE: STILLS POSTERS AND DESIGNS (3)

ROY 'CHUBBY' BROWN

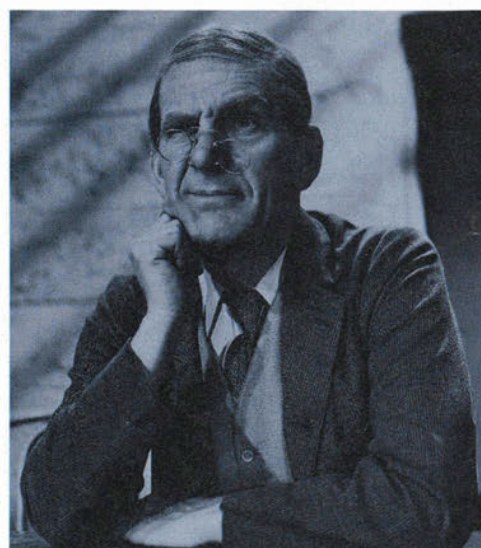
Put Benny Hill in Max Miller's cast-offs, add George Formby, freed from the constraints of innuendo, stir in Sid the Sexist from 'Viz', and filter through provocation, defiance, offensiveness and cheek: result, Roy 'Chubby' Brown. His success is a monstrous reassertion of bottom-line proletarian culture, a fart in the face of all correctness. Too rude for television, the architect and chief beneficiary of the boom

in 'blue video', he presides over a foul-mouthed, dead-end-job, down-the-pub world where bodily functions rule and sensitivity is for weaklings. His feature film, the intergalactically scatological 'U.F.O.' (above), was so threadbare it made a Formby vehicle look like 'Waterworld'. It suffered from the lack of a live audience, but he's a funny-bones comic and that still shone through.

TONY HANCOCK

Hancock was more than capable of robust, red-nosed clowning (as below, in 'Orders are Orders'), but this has been all but forgotten in the retrospective pall cast over his work by his inclination towards melancholy, and his eventual suicide. Perhaps it is now time to reclaim him, and to insist on his more basic comic attributes – the expressive plasticity of his face, the masterful use of stresses and pauses, the delight in undermining cultural pretensions (ironic given what his yearning for intellectual recognition led to), a sour sexual politics Les

Dawson would recognise. Hancock chafed at the generic constrictions of radio catchphrases and sitcom bickerings, aspiring to gloom in his big-screen pet project 'The Punch and Judy Man', but we don't have to endorse this. His decline is a warning to those funny men who believe making us laugh is an incomplete calling and who strike out in search of a broader stage, for once they leave the strict routines and tight boundaries, the freedom too often turns to vertigo – and the only way is down. Hancock sacrificed discipline, a literally fatal error of judgment.



WILL HAY

A trained engineer who never lost his taste for structure and precision, Hay learned his craft in seaside concert parties, had a spell as a juggler, and played a character based on his schoolmistress sister before deciding on the harassed, hopeless male teacher that secured his fame. His films are far better realised narratives than most British comedies of the 1930s and the reason is simple: he was no isolated stand-up but the focal point of a tightly-drilled team, his school-room sketches touring the halls for years before they reached

the screen (their first Royal Variety Performance was in 1925). Hay said he saw them as "a series of mines which have to be exploded at certain intervals", which the films bear out. Hay tended to be the feed for his far more funny-bones companions, the senile trickster and whining fat boy (Moore Marriott and Graham Moffatt) who would strand him in their manic spirals of cross-purposed cross-talk. But it's Hay we remember (as above in 'Convict 99'), an outsmarted icon of authority undermined by the machinations of the lower orders.

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● "My earliest influences... couldn't have been more jolly, couldn't have been less grim," wrote Terence Davies in 1992, in his foreword to the (then) complete collection of his screenplays. There is a distant note of apology or defensiveness in this remark, as if in anticipation of the protests of viewers subjected first to the austere compositions and severely formal camera movements of his own films, and now baffled to discover that his three favourite movies – as recently listed in a *Time Out* directors' poll – were *Singin' in the Rain*, *Young at Heart* and *Meet Me in St Louis*. None of these films, of course, is lacking in compositional precision or impeccably choreographed camerawork: but what makes them seem so remote from Davies' own work is their fundamental light-heartedness, their breezy disavowal of solemnity. How, a viewer of his new film *The Neon Bible* might ask, did he get from *there* to *here*?

The *Time Out* list pointed up some of the intriguing contradictions in his influences. His top ten included *All About Eve*, *Kind Hearts and Coronets*, *The Ladykillers* and *The Happiest Days of Your Life*: but as his favourite director he nominated Bergman, not noted for Technicolor tap sequences or a preference for Margaret Rutherford as a leading lady.

No director – probably not even Quentin Tarantino – is more thoroughly saturated in popular culture than Davies. Ever since the funeral scene of Robert Tucker's mother in *Death and Transfiguration* – which raises Doris Day's 'It All Depends on You' to new levels of bitter-sweet irony – right through to Gena Rowlands' smoky, slightly off-key performances of 'My Romance' and 'How Long Has This Been Going On' in *The Neon Bible*, his films have depended for much of their emotional impact on the worlds of the torch song and the musical comedy. And yet, for many arthouse cinemagoers, he still has the reputation of being a "difficult" director: perhaps because, by contrast with Tarantino, there is nothing knowing or hip about the way he deploys pop culture; or perhaps because, paradoxically, his films are too direct and sincere, with none of the high-gloss camp of a Greenaway or Almodóvar. Some people, after all, find them simply depressing. One thinks of the late Alexander Mackendrick, who had just seen a rough cut of *Madonna and Child* and was asked by a colleague, "That's a gay film, isn't it?" – to which he famously replied, "Not at the moment it isn't." There were stories from this year's Cannes festival, too, of audiences booing and cat-calling at a preview of *The Neon Bible*, completely wrongfooted by its unfashionably stately pacing and also – I suspect – by the sheer *quietness* with which its narrative unfolds. (It must be one of the quietest movies ever made: the last few minutes of the soundtrack, consisting of bird-song, cicadas and rippling water instead of the hitherto obligatory, send-'em-out-with-the-adrenaline-pumping pop song, makes even sitting through the end credits a magical experience.) And three years ago, when the short-lived *Modern Review* was still being regarded with indulgence and sustained pressure was being applied to some newspapers – notably *The Guardian* – to liven up its film coverage, Davies' *The Long Day Closes* became something of a *locus classicus* for the battle between the younger and the more experienced film critics. The Turks howled indignation at the

JOLLY AND GRIM



No one goes to a Terence Davies film for the acting, however powerful the performances. On the eve of the release of his new film 'The Neon Bible', Jonathan Coe examines the work of a director who divides critics

spectacle of so much review space being given to a film which could waste valuable seconds of screen time on close-ups of a sunlit patch of carpet (with Butterworth's rapturous 'A Shropshire Lad' on the soundtrack), while *Wayne's World* – released the same week, with its finger pressed far more firmly on the pulse of youth culture – was edged ruthlessly into the critical margins.

Of course, the very fact that Davies' work has provoked such extreme reactions, both for and against, is testament to its power. I discovered his films some time in the mid-1980s, when there was a screening of his Trilogy – *Children*, *Madonna and Child* and *Death and Transfiguration* – at Warwick University Arts Centre. In those student days I was as morose and alienated as Davies' alter ego, Robert Tucker, and I was impressed by the note of abject misery which the three films managed to sustain, and which chimed so satisfactorily with the *Weltschmerz* of someone who had just spent two years living in a bedsit in Coventry on a student grant. (I would later find out that Davies had also lived in that city for a while, explaining a lot.)

What drew me to these films above all, though, was the information that in *Death and Transfiguration* the dying and decrepit Robert Tucker was to be played by Wilfrid Brambell – who I knew, naturally, from his starring role in *Steptoe and Son*, but who had more or less vanished from our TV and cinema screens since that series ended its run in 1974. His appearance in this film – it can hardly be called a performance – is a bizarre cinematic swansong. Brambell is given no lines and spends most of the time being lifted in and out of bed, wheeled along a hospital corridor (toothless mouth drooped in wide, forlorn, dreamy abstraction) and eventually, in the memorable final sequence, dying noisily in his bed, his "long breaths getting progressively shallow", his death rattle competing with the sound of Tucker's mother singing 'You're Still the Only Boy in the World' on the soundtrack, and his thin arms outstretched towards a blazing white light which intensifies and floods the screen until its sudden fade to black. Davies' deployment of Brambell in this film is, therefore, as remarkable for what it ignores as for what it achieves, and this bears out the idea that he is not from the hip or knowing school of pop culture manipulators (the school of Tarantino, if you like). Albert Steptoe was one of the most loved and recognised icons of British postwar popular culture, but Davies doesn't expect or even allow Brambell to bring any of this baggage with him to the screen: his own personal vision is so consuming, so intense (so narrow, a detractor would say) that it manages to defuse all the associations which pop-culture references would normally trigger off in an audience.

(There's a more regrettable incidence of this in *The Neon Bible*, when the young hero, David, first realises how far his mother has drifted towards insanity. He and his Aunt Mae come home one evening from his graduation ceremony, only to find that his mother has already been abandoned by the woman who was supposed to be looking after her for the night: "She told me I was crazy, Mae. Right to my face." In the novel, John Kennedy Toole renders this in his characteristically deadpan prose: "Aunt Mae was already in the kitchen when I got there, and I heard her asking Mother where Flora was. Mother was sitting at the

table looking at the picture of the white crosses. Aunt Mae asked her again. She looked up like she was surprised to see Aunt Mae." Davies' version is equally characteristic: he has David's mother standing on the front steps of the house, framed by the doorway, and singing a frail, plaintive version of the Irish lullaby 'Too-ra-loo-ra-loo-ral' straight to camera. It ought to be an unbearably moving moment; and it is almost moving. But for me and for anyone else who has seen *HouseSitter*, it's also irresistibly reminiscent of Steve Martin – eyes screwed up in an agony of emotional constipation – singing the same song to his estranged father in front of a bemused crowd of partygoers. It's one of the great moments in Martin's career, and its sublime ridiculousness cannot help seeping into Davies' scene and interfering with it. Davies may well not have seen the film, but it seems symptomatic of his general tendency not to realise, or to ignore, or not to be interested in the way that all artworks – and this is especially true of pop culture – talk to and impinge upon one another. Sometimes his lack of an intertextual sense can look like a weakness.)

There isn't a great deal of music in *Children*, apart from the closing number 'The Ballad of Barbara Allen' and the remarkable sequence – silent except for Stella Dickinson's long cor anglais solo – in which Tucker and his mother sit on a bus, the young boy looking animatedly out of the window and his mother staring into space until she inexplicably begins to break down in tears. Here, as elsewhere in Davies' work, it's the sheer expressive simplicity of his technique that moves and impresses. His films stand or fall by their emotional directness, and if the Trilogy is still my favourite, this is precisely because it's the most raw and unpolished. The same holds true for the more ironic sequence in *Madonna and Child*, where the camera's slow panning around the gilded interior of a Catholic church, over the first six Stations of the Cross, is accompanied not only by sacred music, but by a telephone conversation which finds Tucker nervously informing a tattooist that "I want my bollocks tattooed." Here the shock value resides in the uncomplicated, almost naive and artless nature of the juxtaposition, rather than in the material itself. (And besides, the release print is lacking in the screenplay's most graphic detail: Tucker's insistence that "I want 'fuck' down the back of my cock in big black letters and a swastika on each of my balls.") Coming at the precise centre of the Trilogy, this sequence localises and focuses its fundamental conflict, between Tucker's sexuality and his residual faith. I've always felt that the absence of such a conflict in *Distant Voices*, *Still Lives* and *The Long Day Closes* deprives them of any real motor, so that while both films are often ravishing texturally and visually, they seem slightly inert by comparison. Similarly, the absence of Davies' seemingly instinctive control over the camera is keenly felt in his treatment of similar material in his novel *Hallelujah Now*. As you'd expect, it's a painfully sincere and direct book, and highly readable for that reason alone, but structure and style are all over the place: the abrupt changes from past to present tense, and from first to third person, and the great slabs of interpolated poetry and Biblical quotation all show a writer groping for mastery of what is not his natural medium. ►

Those of us relieved to hear that Davies had finally got his family history out of his system might have been jumping the gun

Gena Rowlands and Drake Bell in Terence Davies' 'The Neon Bible', left

◀ John Kennedy Toole's novel *The Neon Bible* could hardly be more different: it's a work of dazzling, precocious maturity, written in 1953 when the author was only 16. (It made me hot with envy to remember the callow nonsense I was writing at that age.) In a way, all the same, it's the book Terence Davies himself might have written if he'd been born a novelist, since it treats many of his favourite themes: a sensitive young boy growing up in a protective family environment, where the brutalising influence of his father is counteracted by a warm and supportive feminine presence; the destructive effects of religious dogma; and, of course, the redeeming and transformative power of popular music. Those of us who were on the whole relieved to hear that Davies had finally got his family history out of his system might, it seems, have been jumping the gun: actually *The Neon Bible* could almost be another slice of Davies' autobiography, relocated to America's deep South and provided with a tragic *dénouement*.

The novel begins on a train, as the teenage David leaves his home town for good, after a night in which he has witnessed the death of his mother and killed a sinister priest called the Reverend Watkins. We don't know any of this at first, though, and Davies is not in the business of giving away plot details. "I didn't want to dramatise the book," he has said, "I wanted to interpret it." The motif of David sitting in the train carriage – his expressionless face staring at a full moon which is often seen in reflection – punctuates the film and is one of the many poetic devices used to break loose from the conscientious realism of Toole's novel. Some devices are more successful than others. After the scene where David's father has beaten up his mother, David steps out onto the porch to take in the enormity of what he's just seen, and in a few seconds (courtesy of morphing techniques) he physically grows from a boy of ten to a young man of 15. Presumably it's meant to symbolise his sudden, forced maturity, but I found it abrupt and alienating: a moment when the rigorous simplicity of Davies' methods almost shades into simple-mindedness.

On the whole, however, Davies' anti-realism does preserve the strong sense of interiority

which characterises the novel. The small Southern town where the action takes place is never named by Toole, and by the same token Davies allows us to get well into the narrative before giving us an establishing shot of the main street: like Toole, he is interested in the town as a state of mind rather than as a physical location. (There's a strange, perhaps unintended equivalent for this in the Trilogy, during which Tucker himself ages some 70 years, while the city of Liverpool visibly doesn't.) In this way Davies foregrounds the theme of community, just as he did in *Distant Voices*, *Still Lives* and *The Long Day Closes*: but what makes *The Neon Bible* far more interesting is that here he interrogates this concept rather than merely celebrating it. If the two earlier films were, on one level, nostalgic elegies for a vanished form of family and community life which shielded its members from (unspecified) outside forces, *The Neon Bible* shows a more complex awareness that the process of growing up in such a close-knit environment might also have its tragic and stifling downside.

Like the Trilogy, *The Neon Bible* contains a crucial central episode which focuses this conflict. It takes place at a revivalist meeting organised by the charismatic evangelist Bobbie Lee Taylor (young in the book, middle-aged in the film). In both the novel and the film, an authentic version of religious feeling is offered in the form of a bedtime prayer spoken by Aunt Mae: "We'll pray that your mother feels well tomorrow and that nothing happens to your Poppa tonight and that you and I... that you and I won't be hurt too bad tomorrow or ever again." 30 pages go by in the book before David attends the meeting, but immediately after Aunt Mae's prayer Davies audaciously pans sweepingly up to a star-studded night sky, and then down to a wide-angle shot of people arriving at Bobbie Lee's tent – greeting each other, laughing, talking – as if to argue for absolute continuity between the impulse behind her prayer and the impulse which draws the townsfolk to the evangelical show.

Davies wastes little time in establishing Bobbie Lee as a fake: we see him waiting in the wings, his face in sinister half-shadow, murmuring to him-

self, "Good crowd. Good money". The gradual collapse of the audience into tearful hysteria under the sway of Bobbie Lee's eloquence is very affecting, but Davies ends the sequence on a bleak note: instead of the 'fast song' with which the meeting concludes in Toole's version, we get a mournful arrangement of the New World Symphony sung by the congregation, and the camera tracks towards the doorway of the tent until it becomes a rectangle of infinite blackness. Compare this with the sense of liberation generated later in the film when David is introduced to poetry by his kindly English teacher. Here, as the poem is recited, the camera homes in on the brightness of a sunlit window, and the soundtrack jumps into life with an exuberant version of 'Dixie'.

It's remarkable how often, in teasing out the meaning of Davies' films, you find yourself talking about camera movements and musical accompaniments rather than dialogue or performances. Wonderful though Gena Rowlands and Diana Scarwid are in their roles, no one goes to a Terence Davies film for the acting. (And in *The Neon Bible*, incidentally, there's another example of his

'The Neon Bible' shows a complex awareness that growing up in this close-knit environment might have a tragic and stifling downside

curious lack of interest in the wider implications of casting pop culture icons: Denis Leary plays David's father, a part which gives him absolutely no scope for the verbal energy and manic invention for which he's become so popular.) The most eloquent sequence in this film is again wordless, and consists of a series of long-held shots dissolving into one another: the coffins of soldiers who have not survived the war, ranged on a lawn and draped in the American flag; David sitting on the train, reaching up to lay his hand on a reflection of the moon; a white cotton sheet billowing on a clothes line, blurring again into the Stars and Stripes; a class of children solemnly pledging allegiance in their schoolroom. All of this is scored to 'Tara's Theme' from *Gone With the Wind*. The fluttering sheet takes us back to that controversial shot of a carpet in *The Long Day Closes*, a shot that for Davies' critics summed up everything that was precious and wilfully enigmatic about his technique. It's true that in his earlier films some of his references – including those culled from popular culture – while ostensibly gesturing towards a notion of community, of shared experience, were in fact intensely private. But his use of Max Steiner's music in this sequence, with its instant evocation of Southern history and its tremulously hopeful overtones ("Tomorrow is another day"), suggests a director fully in command of a wide and intelligible emotional register. In *The Neon Bible*, it seems that Davies has at last made a transition from the compelling solipsism of his autobiographical films to the beginnings of something altogether more powerful. *'The Neon Bible' opens on 13 October and is reviewed on page 54 of this issue*

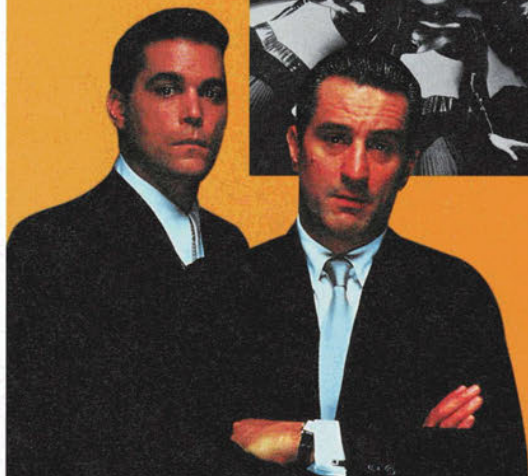


Jacob Tierney as the older David in 'The Neon Bible', with the girl he courts

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SUPPLEMENT



"The 30s are unthinkable without Bushy Berkeley's deranged, beaming, inhuman geometries, which as celebrations of the purely cinematic match anything from the European avant-garde"
Andy Medhurst on 'Gold Diggers of 1935'

"At the time, Antonioni appeared to be utterly clueless about swinging London. Now it's clear that he saw through the stylistic sham: he knew that, in the deepest existential sense, the sound of rustling leaves can drown out the Yardbirds"
John Powers on 'Blowup'

"Never write a sequel, but if you do, write this one."
Robin Swicord on 'The Godfather Part II'

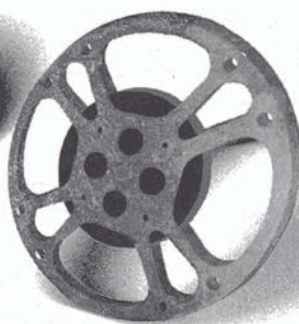
"We leave the film with a memory of fluid cameras arranging themselves in freeze-frames of faces: an understanding of how one could stop for pasta in the middle of a hit, and why someone would prefer to be a gangster than the President of the United States"
Jose Arroyo on 'GoodFellas'

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With her bold bone-structure and the curtain of her wheat-gold Jackie O coif, Gena Rowlands is the classic Hollywood icon that got away. Had she been born into the Studio era of the 1930s or 1940s, one suspects that she would have sewn up a career running across the grand roles, from the toughboots molls through to stoic mothers and peppery *femmes fatales*. She has the angular hardness which typifies the best of them in that period – one can imagine her, as easily as Crawford, Davis, Stanwyck or Bacall, starkly lit, dressed in Edith Head or Adrian, shoulderpads, Grecian pleated drapes, wedge slingbacks and all. Perhaps it's just the poised way that she lights and smokes her cigarettes, that classic clinch between the lips, but she has a profile that seems to demand a portrait by Clarence Sinclair Bull. There is something solid yet also slinky and malleable about her, sometimes tangible but also allusive. This strong visual style carries through into her performance.

However, her career kicked off in the 1950s, when sex had become polarised. It was the time of Monroe, and a bosomy, soft-and-sweet, doe-eyed vulnerability was the order of the day. Rowlands' mature persona and stone-crafted beauty hardly fitted this picture. Consider the fate of similarly singular actresses of her generation, such as Ellen Burstyn or Angie Dickinson: their filmographies flicker with extraordinary moments, but their movie careers bear testi-

mony to talents ultimately kept at bay. One sees all too easily here what might have happened to Rowlands if she had not worked with director (and husband) John Cassavetes and given her career substance. When David Thomson suggests provocatively in his entry on Cassavetes that she is a test case for the writer/director's approach, he poses the following question: "Was she a great actress, a prisoner in her husband's films, or the chief recipient of Cassavetes' assumption that performance was a metaphor for life?" (Rowlands has no entry of her own in Thomson's book, though Ben Gazzara – another Cassavetes regular – does.)

The fact is that her work with her husband – from the gruelling and raw *A Woman Under the Influence* (1974), in which she plays an ordinarily mad housewife, to the almost romantic *Gloria* (1980), where she is cast as the brassy New York gangster's gal turned reluctant guardian angel to a six-year-old wanted by the mob – allowed her to enjoy artistic freedoms, stretching her in extraordinary directions that few of her American female contemporaries have experienced. In Cassavetes' films, she played those durable and imposing roles of the 1930s and 1940s – the toughboots moll and the stoic mother – but she unravelled them, messed them up and brought them kicking and screaming into the present. Her subsequent performances for other directors only further convince one of her stature: these include the mother who discovers that

her son has Aids in John Erman's TV movie *An Early Frost* (1985); the mother who wants to do right by her children in Paul Schrader's underrated study of a blue-collar family *Light of Day* (1987); Marion, the buttoned-up academic in Woody Allen's *Another Woman* (1988); and now the tender Aunt Mae, a gorgeous fading bloom of a woman, in Terence Davies' exquisite adaptation of Southern writer John Kennedy Toole's *The Neon Bible*, an achingly sad novella set in the Bible Belt South during the 40s.

What's striking about Rowlands, and what makes her so iconic a figure, is how little her physical appearance changes in each film. Certainly she is not of the hat-and-accent school of acting. Only with *Another Woman*'s Marion, this philosophy professor on the verge of redefining her life, is there a notable cosmetic departure – Rowlands' hair is slightly darkened and tightly drawn away from her face, to suggest the sobriety of the role.

Not that such touches are needed, for as Marion, Rowlands acts with her whole body, which itself seems buttoned up and tightly drawn away from the world. Her movements are slow and deliberating, as though bound by the past that she must reconsider. One immediately discerns that this is a woman to whom emotions are something embarrassing, yet under that resolute surface one can intuit just how painful that in itself is to her, as

Toughboots moll: Gena Rowlands in 'Gloria'

FROM THE INSIDE OUT

Rowlands pulls together the fragile contradictions of the character.

So it is not surprising that she declares herself an "inside out" actress in her approach to performance. She starts with her lines, preferring to be familiar with them, digesting them before she moves on to think about the character. As she comments simply of that process: "I think it must be like writing, you draw on things that you have wondered about, people in restaurants, things that you have seen, quarrelling at the table, something here, something there, they all come together in one piece." The characters are authenticated through such commonplace anthropological observations rather than copious research into their profession or situation. Rowlands did not need to hang around the philosophy department of NYU to prepare to play Marion. For the role of Aunt Mae, a torch singer who never quite made the grade, she did not have to haunt the lesser night-club circuits.

The only role in which she admits to contemplating the exteriors first was Gloria Swenson, in *Gloria*. "I wanted to develop a walk that said everything about the character right away, because she was alone, a tough woman in New York and body language means a lot in that big city." As she stalks around Manhattan, silky and glamorous in her Emmanuel Ungaro outfits, she is as high and sturdy as a skyscraper on her slingbacks. The character of Gloria is a wonder-

fully undomesticated woman, who can't cook to save her life, who hates kids, quipping that she can't stand the sight of milk, who talks to her young charge as though he were her age and who can pull a gun on a hoodlum-packed car without letting a hair flying out of place. But she is so much more than just a tough broad with an assured swagger. The internal work that Rowlands did on her character is caught in glimpses – it's clear that Gloria knows that she hasn't quite fixed up her life as she would like it, that she is now tired of the fight. It comes through in such moments as when she negotiates with one of the members of the mob. She can still put on her charm routine, and she can still do it right but the exasperation is ever so briefly manifest.

Importantly, Rowlands does not surrender herself to adopt a persona. There is every sense of someone with a firm sense of herself to return to. That is why she does not need disguises, why she can allow herself to be recognisable in each film.

It is also perhaps why she can play such an extraordinary range. Terence Davies states that he knew instinctively that Rowlands was right for the role of Aunt Mae as soon as he read Kennedy Toole's novella. But to confirm it he watched *A Woman Under the Influence* and *An Early Frost* again. "*A Woman Under the Influence* is very operatic, a wonderful performance, but operatic, but in *An Early Frost*, she is very quiet, and that rage, she is like a rock, you just know that there is this incredibly strong woman. It is the equivalent of someone being able to sing grand opera and *leider*."

Certainly there is something extremely diva-like about Rowlands' performance as Mabel

Longhetti in *A Woman Under the Influence*. It is a frightening, difficult and awkward portrait of a woman who has lost her centre, who is only authentic in her madness. In a line that speaks volumes, her husband Nick (Peter Falk) states, "Mabel is not crazy, she cooks, she cleans, she sews, what's crazy about that?"

Rowlands unravels Mabel till she is a dead nothing, but then scrapes her back together for the finale that finds the Longhettis tragically resuming their little domestic routines, as normal as they ever will be. But even through this candid, emotionally naked performance, Mabel never seems vulnerable. Rather it is the anger that seeps through, albeit in useless fashion – she is a woman who has imploded in on herself. The same could be said for Myrtle Gordon, the actress-protagonist in Cassavetes' *Opening Night* (1977), though here the film (in *Persona*-style) externalises the volatile and damaging conflicts that are raging inside. Grand opera indeed.

In contrast Aunt Mae is beautifully played, as *leider* that are bursting at the seams to be something more passionate and explosive. As with everything about *The Neon Bible*, a flood of emotion is there, but held back. Aunt Mae is the glamorous light in the young hero's austere life, a singer who made it small time because "I looked good in clothes and could carry a tune." Her chirpy demeanour, however, belies the sense of her own failure. Rowlands tells you all about Aunt Mae – it is there in fleeting moments across her face, in the dull glimmer in her eyes. Which is something that you can't get with props and accessories. As with Davis, Crawford and the rest, it's what makes her such a compulsive performer to watch.

TERENCE DAVIES: SOME THOUGHTS ON ACTING

There is a certain type of acting that I don't like, most of it British. It is anaemic and mannered, and I don't like that. The trouble with American acting is that it's not anaemic – in fact it's very passionate – but it can also be very sentimental and I don't like that either. You are playing ordinary people, and ordinary people are ordinary people because they are not actors. You are trying to film the truth, but even with a gesture you have to think, Would an ordinary person do that? You can always tell when an actor, British or American, doesn't know what to do. In England they start pulling faces, or there is shoe-acting, when they start looking at their shoes. In America they burst into tears and over-emote. Ordinary people don't do that. I want the truth of something, and the real truth of something is always small – I got that from reading and playing Chekhov. It is the poetry of the ordinary, but the ordinary has to be true – as soon as you start to act the ordinary it's killed stone dead. I am fascinated by trying to capture those odd things that you notice at the most awful times of your life. Why should you notice them? But you do. That seems to me such a powerful truth. That moves me. I want to communicate that to an audience. That is what makes me passionate about the truth of a performance or the truth of a gesture.

For me the beauty of those small gestures is beautifully illustrated in Yasujiro Ozu's *Autumn Afternoon*. There is a moment where this man wants his daughter to marry well, and he says, "I have arranged this marriage for you." She doesn't want to get married, but she will, because her father wants it. She goes upstairs and the camera cuts to her upstairs: she is sitting with her back to the camera and all she is doing is these stroking movements over her hair. And it is heart-breaking. You suddenly know the truth of something and it is irretrievably right. But how that alchemy works!

The trouble with British acting is that we don't understand what film is. We think that it is making faces or talking and it's not, it's what you don't do. And that is not the same as doing nothing. They always say in front of the camera you do nothing, which is precisely what is wrong with British acting. Look at what the Americans do with tiny bits of material. Treat Williams for instance, in *Smooth Talk* (a film that I don't think is particularly good). There is a scene in which he drives up to the girl's house and gets out of his car and sits on the bonnet. Now if you examine that scene, he gets out of his car, sits on the bonnet, pushes himself up and swings, and then sits down. Only an American actor would think of that.

SAM

PECKINPAH

With the NFT retrospective and the release of a restored version of 'The Wild Bunch', Paul Seydor reassesses the achievements of a great and underrated director

● When Sam Peckinpah died, from heart failure on the morning of 28 December 1984, reaction in the media and the popular press was almost non-existent. *Variety* ran an obituary, and some entertainment reporters on television noted the occasion (when they took any notice at all) with a remark or two about the “maverick” Hollywood director who had a “flair” for violence. But there were no obituaries of substance and little commentary that gave any sense of the artist who had just passed away, or the seminal importance of his best work. Even most movie reviewers and film critics paid little or no mind.

Two notable exceptions were Michael Sragow and Kathleen Murphy. Murphy prefaced her obituary in *Film Comment* with a quotation from Herman Melville’s famous letter to Nathaniel Hawthorne: “He says No! in thunder; but the Devil himself cannot make him say yes. For all men who say yes, lie.” This is fitting. Peckinpah ruthlessly scorned the fatuous certainties and the pious hypocrisies rampant in our official culture, and he undermined every absolute he came across, so fearlessly that it was impossible not to recognise in him the wounded Romantic, the tragic idealist, the agonised believer. Which may be another way of saying that Peckinpah also said his own forms of yes. But his optimism was hard won and transitory – he had to fight the battles over and over. Virtue in his films is so intimately entwined with vice that his affirmations are less clarion calls than insistent whispers from almost forgotten recesses in the heart. Yet the lasting impression is often of a man trying to get to the most decent places in himself.

Those of us who really love his films know that much of his work is suffused with a deep and expansive love: for the tarnished valour of his flawed, corrupt heroes, who discover in themselves a near-vestigial sense of honour that they were unaware they possessed until all that’s left is to die protecting it; for the unruly verve and vigour of his two-bit, red-necked peckerwoods prospectors, bounty hunters, saddletramps, cowboys, low-rent miners, bums, and other assorted lowlifes and hangers-on, in all their rude, feisty glory; for his wisened-up prostitutes and dance-hall girls who have courage enough to endure violence, grace enough to walk away from vengeance, and innocence enough to believe there is another way; for the intransigence, at once ornery and noble, of all his losers, loners, drifters and misfits, who assert themselves in a world doing its damndest to run them off, out or over; for the rugged magnificence of his parched landscapes through which sometimes shines a bleak splendour; for the high country of his youth, with its clear, cool lakes and its soaring mountain ranges eloquent enough to ratify the passing of those who manage to enter their houses justified. Asked how he’d like his own passing to be marked, Peckinpah answered, “I suppose the fact that I never stopped searching.”

The despair he feared so much almost caught

up with him in the late 70s and early 80s. After the alcohol of his whole adult life, the cocaine he started using on *The Killer Elite* and the heart attack of 1979 (which led to a pacemaker), Peckinpah found himself in probably the saddest, most abject and lonely place in which he’d ever been. The industry was afraid to hire him, he had no family life to speak of, and had alienated many friends, not because he abused or took advantage of them – their loyalty and forbearance had long ago passed those tests – but because they just couldn’t stand to see him destroying himself with drugs and booze.

Yet somewhere he found reserves of sheer will and strength that enabled him, fitfully and inconsistently, to pull something good out of these last years. One thing was a reconciliation with his son Matthew. He also repaid a debt to the man who gave him his first break in features, Don Siegel (“my patron”), by second-unit directing an action sequence in *Jinxed!*, a film Siegel was making with Bette Midler. The job served its purpose, demonstrating that he could still work productively, responsibly and well, and it landed him his last film. *The Osterman Weekend* began as an impossibly convoluted script. The plot, about espionage, betrayal, and official corruption among three friends and their families, hardly seemed worth the effort of figuring it out. Peckinpah wanted to do a rewrite, the moneymen said no. The result, released in November 1983, was a desultory affair, and as a Peckinpah film disappointing. There were the usual charges of studio interference, but Peckinpah soft-pedalled them. In truth, as he knew, there was little difference between his preview (shown once, in a mall in Orange County) and the version eventually released.

Violence and meaning

Whenever the subject of violence in the arts comes up, Peckinpah and his films, *The Wild Bunch* and *Straw Dogs* in particular, are at the epicentre of the debate. Those familiar with his work realise that the vast majority of his critics haven’t really seen much of it, if any. If they had, they could never accuse him of half the things they do – particularly of trafficking in gore, which he never does. The actual amount of gore – measured in length of time – is 20 or 30 seconds-worth, maybe, in all 14 films combined. The most notorious single instance remains the throat-cutting in *The Wild Bunch* (literally a split second), which is thoroughly justified by its context and absolutely essential to the story. Then there is the moment in *Straw Dogs* when one of the villagers shoots his foot off with a shotgun. There are those who insist we see a blown-off bare foot. What we in fact see is a close-up of a shoe with its toe blown off, but no flesh, no bone, no dangling tendons or shredded veins. And in *Bring Me the Head of Alfredo Garcia*, the head is only glimpsed once: in tight close-up, from the back, and all we see is hair. (Ironically, some faulted Peckinpah’s courage for not showing it more graphically! ▶



◀ There are games an artist can never win, and this is one.)

But all of this merely begs the question why Peckinpah's violent films are experienced as so much more violent when he is far from the worst offender – or even, as far as gore goes, an offender at all. Peckinpah himself once said that some people want to walk out on his films: "But they can't. They can't turn their faces away. They watch, and that makes them mad." One great difference between him and his imitators lies in how deeply and passionately felt his violence is, and how securely it is tied to character, to milieu, to story – in a word to meaning.

With Peckinpah, every bullet, hit and fall pricks or stings or hurts with real feeling. The action is always charged with an ambiguous, volatile tension. Nor is his violence disturbing only for obvious reasons. It expresses something far darker and more subversive: the excitement of violence, the thirst for violence that brings us to violent entertainment in the first place.

His most distinctive stylistic synthesis is his combination of fast cutting and slow motion to render action and violence. He used to tell his editors that the only reason to film in slow motion is when something happens so fast you can't see it otherwise. Although in practice he used it for many other reasons, his remark provides a clue why he kept his slow-motion shots so brief. It is the build-up and the release that he wanted to capture, because perception and feeling, violence as psychological effect, are what chiefly interested him.

Peckinpah wanted more than anything to find a way of fluidly incorporating slow motion into the 'ongoingness' of filmic narrative. In *The Seven Samurai* Kurosawa virtually stops the show for the high-speed shots. In *Bonnie and Clyde*, a film Peckinpah loved, Arthur Penn comes much closer to Peckinpah's ideal in the climactic dance of death; but even there, slow motion is a device that segregates the climax as a kind of set-piece. The first cut of the opening robbery in *The Wild Bunch*, which went on for over 20 minutes, was very linear, according to its film editor Lou Lombardo. Lombardo said he would shorten it, but Peckinpah told him not to cut it down just yet. "See if you can't mesh it together." "So that's what I did," Lombardo said. "I intercut all the separate pieces of action." It was Eisensteinian montage freed from ideological point-making and turned toward a new, profoundly disturbing psychological expressiveness and an authentic stylistic innovation which left few films that came in its wake untouched by its influence.

Transcendental ancestry

"When I was five or six years old," Peckinpah once said, "I remember riding my horse up around the pines in Crane Valley. Her name was Nellie, and I'd only have a rope around her nose for a rein – a handmade hackamore. It was where my grandfather, Denver Church, ran his cattle. And a couple of miles away, my Grandfather Peckinpah had built his sawmill. It was the finest time of my life. There will never be another time like that."

To call this early memory "transcendental" may be too much, but such Transcendentalists as Emerson and Thoreau would have had no trouble recognising the conditions, and would have been

pleased that all the important conventions are observed and satisfied. It takes place in the wilderness and is characterised by an intimacy with the landscape that we know only as children. Though the experience is solitary, there is great feeling of oneness with the world and of being connected, to something beyond and much larger than the self that is nevertheless continuous with it – hence, the awareness of the two grandfathers and the currents of history that flow through them. The intensity of the experience is matched only by its equally intense evanescence, and the very brevity is part of what gives it, in the critic Richard Poirier's words, that "enormous sense of inner authority", almost as if it were a revelation and thus religious in its significance: all the rest of life is held up against it and judged wanting.

Just as the same patterns turn up again and again in the work of many different American artists, sometimes the forces that operate on one artist's career rejoin with almost uncanny exactitude to affect another's in a similar way. It will be recalled that in 'The Custom House', the quasi-autobiographical preface to *The Scarlet Letter*, Nathaniel Hawthorne imagines himself visited by two long-dead ancestors, both of whom played large determining roles in the history of their native Salem. Though ashamed of the nearly criminal excesses to which their religious zeal led them, and offering to take their sins upon himself, Hawthorne nevertheless imagines the purpose of their visit is to ridicule him for disgracing the family line by becoming a "degenerate fellow", a mere "writer of story-books". And yet, he continues, "Let them scorn me as they will, strong traits of their nature have intertwined themselves with mine." What he means is that certain Puritan notions of sin, guilt, penance and penitence found their way into his novels, as did also some of his ancestors' actual crimes – so his stories are criticisms as well as embodiments of Puritan spirit and sentiment.

Peckinpah's family too has a long history of judges and legislators – who go all the way back to the inception of their native town and county and who played large roles in shaping local, state, and national history. Like Hawthorne, Peckinpah became the black sheep, the first to revolt against the dominant family occupation, becoming (against what the family considered better judgment) a mere teller of story-films, films which in part are (by their maker's own admission) criticisms, questionings and continuations of those family conversations in which he felt the oppressive weight of that authority. Thus obviously and equally strong traits of the family's nature intertwined themselves with his own.

Both storytellers also share a religious streak that, though narrow and set at rather an oblique slant, ran to their very cores. For Hawthorne the greatest sin, which he symbolised by hypnotism, is for one person completely to take over the soul of another. This almost always happens only after the perpetrator gains his victim's trust, so the sin is thus one of betrayal (and perhaps an oblique form of hubris). In Peckinpah, the greatest sin is always betrayal, which never cuts so deeply as when it cuts closest – from friends, family and partners.

Like Hawthorne's novels following *The Scarlet Letter*, even when some of Peckinpah's later films

do not completely work, they contain scenes, sequences, and whole acts of peerless intensity and beauty. In *Bring Me the Head of Alfredo Garcia* he made what is perhaps his most purely personal film, a scathing depiction of everything he was afraid he was becoming: a drunken whore who hires himself out to the highest bidder for the most venal of jobs and ends up hurting or losing everyone closest to him. In this uneven, though terribly audacious film, Peckinpah takes the myth of the loner and the ethos of the buddy film and pushes them to their extremes. The buddies here consist of a near-psychotic lowlife hero, consumed with sexual jealousy, and a disembodied head (which belongs to the man who had cuckolded him). Having lost his only chance for salvation in the woman he inadvertently got killed, the hero himself is killed in a suicidal gun-fight. The last thing he sees before he dies is the barrel of a smoking gun, which becomes a title card that reads, "Directed by Sam Peckinpah". (A year later, asked if he would ever make a 'pure' Peckinpah film, the director replied, "I did *Alfredo Garcia*, and I did it exactly the way I wanted to. Good or bad, like it or not, that was my film.")

Although *The Killer Elite* has no second act and its third act is a silly escape fantasy, in the first third Peckinpah comes closer than anyone else has to capturing on film the kind of hypersensitive masculinity, conditioned by physical wounding and psychic pain, that we find in the great early fiction of Hemingway. It is an impassioned fable about betrayal and trauma.

When Orson Welles saw *Cross of Iron* he cabled Peckinpah that it was the best anti-war film ever about the ordinary enlisted man. The battle scenes are breathtaking. In the hallucinatory hospital sequence Peckinpah has realised perhaps the best depiction of battle fatigue in a fiction film. The laughter that carries over the end titles is too cynical and rather a cliché; but there is one scene that is so personal the film almost moves beyond itself: Sergeant Steiner turns on his superiors and asks with an antipathy so intense it is whispered, "Do you think that just because you and Colonel Brandt are more enlightened than other officers that I hate you any less? I hate all officers..." The dramatic situation warrants the outburst, but it is also Peckinpah almost nakedly venting his hatred for every figure of authority in his life, even those he otherwise liked, and we feel we can almost touch the intensity.

Beautiful trajectory

"The horrible thing about Peckinpah's recent death is that he was the most unfulfilled of great directors," Pauline Kael wrote in 1985. Robert Culp, the director's good friend, wasn't so sure: "It's amazing there is a *Wild Bunch* and all the other pieces. Absolutely astonishing that they were done at all." But both statements contain about half the whole truth, and are equally valid depending on which part of the career you're watching. Like Welles, Peckinpah was blessed in becoming a legend early on and damned by having to live up to it the rest of his life. The years of being blacklisted from features – between *The Cincinnati Kid* and *The Wild Bunch* – so traumatised him that later in his career he would say yes to dreary projects just because he was afraid the last would be his last (and also because making films

was always the strongest narcotic). Add to this the problems he had getting his films made and released in versions he approved, and it's a wonder the career makes any sense at all.

Yet part of it does describe one beautifully shaped trajectory that travels straight and true from the early television work up through *The Deadly Companions*, *Ride the High Country* and *Major Dundee*, to *The Wild Bunch* and *The Ballad of Cable Hogue*; then, after some swings and roundabouts, it comes back on course in *Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid*, his last Western. Peckinpah was blessed in another way too: despite the circumstances that brought *The Wild Bunch* about – few of us would want to endure them, whatever the reward – Peckinpah, like Welles, did get to make his one indisputably great masterpiece.

It is also possible to be unduly harsh about some of the non-Western films. *The Getaway*, his most commercial film, is a superior genre film, sensationally exciting, keenly observed, and far more immersed in character than most genre films – or than it has ever been given credit for. About *Convoy* there is not much to say except that, unlike *The Killer Elite*, a promising second act is about all it has; otherwise, it reflects more the drug abuse behind the camera than what story there is in front of it. *Junior Bonner* is perhaps his loosest, most genial film, a three-day trip through the lives of a family, their friends and associates.

Peckinpah has been called a director more of sequences than of wholes. But he had one of the most sophisticated formal imaginations of all film-makers. *Junior Bonner* is a case in point: it is so relaxed it seems to be making itself up as it goes along, yet it is held together by arches of steel. Each half of the film is built on a delayed meeting. In the first half Junior keeps trying to catch up with his father Ace. Once he almost does, at the hospital, but Ace is asleep and Junior doesn't awaken him. Finally Junior finds him in the parade (up there between "the Indians and the flag", his brother tells him) which is just about the midpoint. At that exact moment Peckinpah cuts in a shot from Junior's view of a beautiful girl who we will discover is named Charmagne. A flirtation ensues, developed entirely imaginatively, virtually without dialogue. Much later, during the barroom brawl, they at last get together. But no sooner do they say hello to each other and exchange a kiss or two, than the director leaves them. By this time Peckinpah has invested so much feeling in the background story of the estranged mother and father that when he moves it to the foreground – following them outside where they argue and then make up – their fleeting reconciliation, at once bittersweet and lovely, displaces the Junior/Charmagne set-up and resolves all the romantic tension of the second half. Arching over both halves is another delayed meeting: Junior's rematch with Sunshine, the bull who threw him at the beginning. If *Junior Bonner* is not quite a great film, it is nevertheless one of the most beautiful ever made, by Peckinpah or anybody else.

Portions of this essay are adapted from Paul Seydor's 'Peckinpah: The Western Films: A Reconsideration' (a revision of his 1980 critical study), due from the University of Illinois Press in the autumn of 1996, and are published with permission from the University of Illinois Press

FILMOGRAPHY

SAM PECKINPAH

Born Fresno, California
21 February 1925
Died Inglewood, California
28 December 1984

Assembled with the help of Val Almendarez, Collection Archivist for the Margaret Herrick Library at the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. Additional sources: 'Peckinpah: A Portrait in Montage' by Garner Simmons; 'Peckinpah: The Western Films' by Paul Seydor

FILMS

Peckinpah claimed that he worked as a dialogue director on 15 feature films at Allied Artists from 1954. He received screen credit on at least eight. Five were for director Don Siegel, who allowed Peckinpah to do uncredited rewrites of many scenes. Peckinpah later said that from Siegel he learned "Everything. What to do, what not to do... [Siegel was] a dedicated, painstaking craftsman, he was maniacal in his continuing battle against stupid studio authority. He was constantly amazed by the idiocy of our industry while still being delighted by its competence and professionalism."

1954

RIOT IN CELL BLOCK 11 (director Don Siegel)
(Peckinpah was dialogue director)
PRIVATE HELL 36 (director Don Siegel)
(Peckinpah was dialogue director)

1955

ANNAPOLIS STORY (director Don Siegel)
(Peckinpah was dialogue director)
WICHITA (director Jacques Tourner)
(Peckinpah was dialogue director and had a bit part)
SEVEN ANGRY MEN (director Charles Marquis Warren)
(Peckinpah was dialogue director)

1956

INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS (director Don Siegel)
(Peckinpah co-rewrote the script and had a small role)
"I wanted to direct, very badly. I did, at USC, in a local community theatre, finally in summer stock. When my second daughter was born I had to make a living and went to work at KLAC-TV as a stage hand (\$22.50 a week). After two-and-a-half years of sweeping stages I got a job as a dialogue director with Don Siegel."



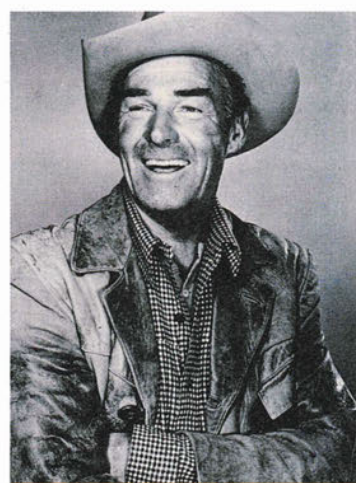
'Invasion of the Body Snatchers'

GREAT DAY IN THE MORNING (director Jacques Tourner)
(Peckinpah was dialogue director)
CRIME IN THE STREETS (director Don Siegel)
(Peckinpah was dialogue director)

1961

ONE-EYED JACKS (director Marlon Brando)
Peckinpah wrote the first draft screenplay. It was an adaptation of 'The Authentic Death of Hendry Jones' by Charles Neider. Peckinpah was replaced by Stanley Kubrick, who was replaced by Marlon Brando. "Marlon screwed it up. He's a hell of an actor, but in those days he had to end up as a hero and that's not the point of the story. Billy the Kid was no hero. He was a gunfighter, a real killer." Material from Peckinpah's original draft was used in 'Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid'.

THE DEADLY COMPANIONS (aka **TRIGGER HAPPY**)
USA/90 minutes
Director: Sam Peckinpah
Screenplay: A. S. Fleischman, from his novel "The one thing I learned [making 'The Deadly Companions'] was never to agree to direct a picture without script control. Since then, I've learned that that sometimes isn't enough."



Randolph Scott in 'Ride the High Country'

1961

RIDE THE HIGH COUNTRY (Original UK title: **GUNS IN THE AFTERNOON**)
USA/94 minutes
Director: Sam Peckinpah
Screenplay: N. B. Stone Jr (The second draft of the script was written by William S. Roberts, who received no screen credit. Peckinpah wrote the third draft, revising virtually all of the dialogue, without credit) "The line 'I want to enter my house justified' in 'Ride the High Country' is my father's. We talked about that just before he died, just before the film was released. He never saw it."

1964

MAJOR DUNDEE
USA/134 minutes
Director: Sam Peckinpah
Screenplay: Harry Julian Fink, Oscar Saul, Sam Peckinpah, from a story by Harry Julian Fink "On 'Dundee' they cut 80 per cent of the violence out and made it [the violence] very attractive and exciting; but the really bloody, awful things that happen to men in war were cut out, which I thought was unforgivable – along with most of the story and all the character interplay and the rest of it... "Dundee was one of the most painful things that has ever happened in my life. Making a picture is, I don't know, you become in love with it. It's part of your life. And when you see it being mutilated and cut to pieces it's like losing a child or something."

1965

THE GLORY GUYS (director Arnold Laven)
This was Peckinpah's first screenplay, an adaptation of Hoffman Birney's novel 'The Dice of God'. Peckinpah wrote the script for the producers of his hit television series, 'The



'Major Dundee'

Rifleman', but they were unable to obtain financing until 1965. Laven made substantial rewrites of Peckinpah's draft, but received no screen credit.

1968

VILLA RIDES (director Buzz Kulik)

Peckinpah was to write and direct, but after he turned in the first draft of his screenplay, the star, Yul Brynner, had him fired: "Brynner said I didn't understand Mexico."

1969

THE WILD BUNCH

USA/145 minutes (original version)/139 minutes (final release version)

Director: Sam Peckinpah

Screenplay: Walon Green, Sam Peckinpah
Cinematographer Lucien Ballard: "We had some great stuff in the desert that was cut out. There was a sandstorm where we could hardly see anything – when we cut we had to shout to the actors to find their way back. At the end we had a long dolly shot as they leave the desert. It had rained, and you could see their tracks... Sam and I worked very well together. I would go to and from work with him, so we would have that extra time to talk to each other."

Peckinpah: "The outlaws of the West have always fascinated me... I suppose I'm something of an outlaw myself. I identify with them. But our characters in 'The Wild Bunch' are limited and adolescent, they're not too bright. They're fascinating. I've always wondered what happened to the outlaw leaders of the Old West when it changed..."

"I got a lot of old newsreels from the Mexican government. And actually I wanted to make the picture in black and white."

1970

THE BALLAD OF CABLE HOGUE

USA/121 minutes (original version)/119 minutes (final release version US)

Producer/Director: Sam Peckinpah

Screenplay: John Crawford, Edmund Penney



'The Ballad of Cable Hogue'

"Possibly my best film. A real love story. I am always criticised for putting violence in my films, but it seems that when I leave it out nobody bothers to see the picture."

1971

STRAW DOGS

UK/118 minutes/ (cut to 113 minutes for US release)

Director: Sam Peckinpah

Screenplay: David Zelag Goodman, Sam Peckinpah, based on the novel 'The Siege of Trencher's Farm' by Gordon M. Williams



'Straw Dogs'

"Amy [Susan George] is taken by one guy she used to go with, and then she's taken from the rear by another guy she didn't want any part of anywhere. The double rape is a little more than she bargained for... I want to rub their noses in the violence of it."

1972

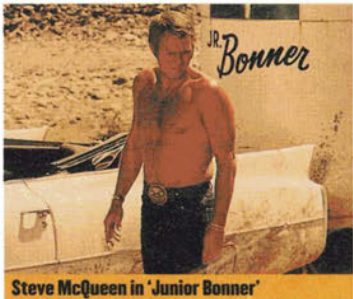
JUNIOR BONNER

USA/103 minutes

Director: Sam Peckinpah

Screenplay: Jeb Rosebrook (Peckinpah contributed substantial dialogue revisions, but received no credit)

Jeb Rosebrook: "The first time we sat down to talk about rewriting the script, I told Sam he could expect to get 120 per cent from me. He said, 'Well, I want 190 per cent. And if I don't get it, I'll tie a tin can to your ass and mail you home.' In the years since, I've always tried to stick that line into something that I've written, but I haven't been able to make it fit."



Steve McQueen in 'Junior Bonner'

THE GETAWAY

USA/122 minutes

Director: Sam Peckinpah

Screenplay: Walter Hill, based on the novel by Jim Thompson (Peckinpah rewrote several scenes, contributing much of the black humour. He received no credit)

"The Getaway" was my first attempt at satire, badly done."

1973

PAT GARRETT AND BILLY THE KID

USA/106 minutes

Director: Sam Peckinpah

Screenplay: Rudolph Wurlitzer (Peckinpah contributed substantial revisions to the screenplay, but received no credit. He also played a small role: Will, the coffin maker)
Jon Tuska, critic: "Kris Kristofferson was drinking two quarts of whisky a day, as he had for years, while playing the Kid. Sam was



'Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid'

passed off because gossip columnist Rona Barrett had said Sam had a drinking problem. Through every scene of Garrett, the drinking had been constant and intense, and Kristofferson, at least, preferred the real thing. In this way the film itself became a descent into alcoholic despair, in which life itself could be reduced to permanent depression punctuated by sudden violence." Rudolph Wurlitzer: "It's a kind of father-son film, with a close friendship and a type of fatalism about death that I think particularly appeals to Peckinpah. Garrett is an ambivalent character, and Peckinpah got behind Garrett: he understands and identifies with him. He also identifies with Billy. Those two things run right through Peckinpah. He considers himself the last of the outlaws, in a way."



'Bring Me the Head of Alfredo Garcia'

1974

BRING ME THE HEAD OF ALFREDO GARCIA

USA/Mexico/112 minutes

Director: Sam Peckinpah

Screenplay: Gordon Dawson, Sam Peckinpah, from a story by Frank Kowalski, Sam Peckinpah

"My doctor told me I had to quit drinking when I started 'Bring Me the Head of Alfredo Garcia'. So I quit. I started smoking marijuana..."

1975

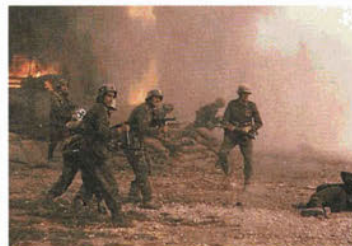
THE KILLER ELITE

USA/122 minutes (Original UK version 120 minutes)

Director: Sam Peckinpah

Screenplay: Marc Norman, Sterling Silliphant, based on the novel 'Monkey in the Middle' by Robert Rostand

"My problem is, I do not suffer fools gracefully and detest petty thievery and incompetence. Other than that, I found you charming, and on occasion, mildly entertaining." (From a memo from Peckinpah to producer Arthur Lewis)



'Cross of Iron'

1977

CROSS OF IRON

UK/West Germany/133 minutes

Director: Sam Peckinpah

Screenplay: Julius Epstein, Walter Kelley, James Hamilton, Sam Peckinpah (uncredited), based on the novel 'Das Geduldige Fleisch' ('The Willing Flesh') by Willi Heinrich
"Cross of Iron is about a group of soldiers retreating from the Eastern front. They're finished and they're running, but they don't stop fighting... I can't tell you what it's been

like: delays, halts in shooting, no rushes, no film sometimes. The producer says it's trouble at the border. I asked him if not paying the crew was due to trouble at the border."

1978

CONVOY

USA/110 minutes

Director: Sam Peckinpah

Screenplay: B. W. L. Norton, based on the song by C. W. McCall

(Peckinpah had a small acting role, as a news cameraman)

"I haven't done one good day's work on this whole picture – not one day that I really felt I'd put it all together." (Peckinpah to editor Garth Craven, on the last day of shooting)

CHINA 9, LIBERTY 37 (director Monte Hellman) (Peckinpah had a cameo role as a charismatic dime novelist)

1979

THE VISITOR (director Michael J. Paradise)

(Peckinpah had a cameo role as seedy gynaecologist)

1982

JINXED! (director Don Siegel)

(Peckinpah was Second Unit Director, uncredited)

1983

THE OSTERMAN WEEKEND

USA/105 minutes

Director: Sam Peckinpah

Screenplay: Alan Sharp, based on the novel by Robert Ludlum

In letters to friends, Peckinpah repeatedly described it as "My first exploitation picture".

TELEVISION

During the 50s and 60s Sam Peckinpah scripted numerous episodes for various television series. "I ask myself why the fuck I make movies, and I look at television and I know why."

1953

PORTRAIT OF A MADONNA

Peckinpah wrote the teleplay and directed this adaptation of Tennessee Williams' one-act play for KLAC-TV. Sam critiqued his own direction in his Masters Thesis for the University of Southern California: "If the acting in general – and that of Miss Collins [Marie Selland, Peckinpah's wife at the time] in particular – seems a little large for the television screen, it is because of the director's failure to adequately change the shade of the performance when they made the transition from stage to television."

TOM TIT TOT

Peckinpah directed this 10-minute pilot for a children's series while working at KLAC-TV.

1955-58

GUNSMOKE

Peckinpah wrote 11 scripts for the show during its first three seasons. Almost all of them were adaptations of radio scripts written by John Meston. The episodes included: 'The Queue' (the first television script Peckinpah sold, and his first screen credit as a writer), 'Yorky', 'The Guitar', 'Cooter', 'How to Die For Nothing', 'The Roundup', 'Legal Revenge', 'Poor Pearl', 'Jealousy', 'Dirt', 'How to Kill a Woman'.

1956-1960

Peckinpah wrote and directed for 12 different television series during these years, all of them Westerns.

20TH CENTURY FOX HOUR ('End of a Gun') Peckinpah wrote this one-hour television adaptation of 'The Gunfighter' by William Bowers and William Sellers. The show was nominated for Best Western of the 1956-57 season by the Writers Guild of America

BOOTS AND SADDLES (writer: 'The Captain') **PONY EXPRESS**

Peckinpah claimed to have written an episode, and there is an untitled teleplay for the show in his files

TALES OF WELLS FARGO (writer: 'Apache Gold')

TOMBSTONE TERRITORY (writer: 'Johnny Ringo's Last Ride')

TRACKDOWN (writer: 'The Town')

THE SINGER (writer)

BROKEN ARROW (writer of 'The Teacher', 'The Knife Fighter', 'The Assassin', 'The Transfer'; 'The Transfer' was also the first series episode that Sam directed for television) "I was never so frightened in my life. Don't let anybody kid you, it's bloody murder learning how to direct."

THE RIFLEMAN (pilot episode 'The Sharpshooter', writer: 'Home Ranch', writer: 'The Marshal', writer/director: 'The Money Gun', co-writer/director: 'The Baby-sitter', co-writer/director: 'The Boarding House', writer/director)

Peckinpah and Arnold Laven created the show, but Sam later split with Laven and his co-producers, Jules Levy and Arthur Gardner.

"I walked from the series because Jules Levy and that group had taken over my initial concept and perverted it into pap. They wouldn't let Johnny [Crawford, the son of Rifleman Lucas McCain] grow up. They refused to let it be the story of a boy who grows to manhood learning what it's all about. They sent me a memo which was a classic. I had it framed and hung it in my office for a long time to remind myself of what I had to deal with. It read: 'Remember, we're doing this for children.' Boy, did I get the message! I sent them a memo back: 'I am not doing this for children; I'm doing this for me.' Then I quit."

KLONDIKE ('Klondike Fever', writer: 'Swoger's Mill', co-writer: 'Man Without a Gun', writer: 'The Kidder', writer)

Peckinpah wrote a number of episodes and worked as a story editor on the show.

ZANE GREY THEATER ('Miss Jenny', co-writer/director; 'Lonesome Road', co-writer/director)

THE WESTERNER (Pilot episode 'Trouble at Tres Cruces', writer/director: 'Jeff', co-writer/director: 'The Old Man', co-writer: 'School Days', co-writer: 'Brown', director: 'Going Home', producer: 'Mrs Kennedy', co-writer: 'Linecamp', producer: 'Treasure', producer: 'The Courting of Libby', director: 'Dos Pinos', producer: 'Hand on the Gun', director: 'Ghost of a Chance', producer: 'The Painting', director)

Peckinpah created this series, which starred Brian Keith, and produced it for Four Star. He maintained creative control and made revisions to scripts, often without credit.

"I created the show because of anger, at never-miss sheriffs, always-right marshals, whitewashed gunfighters - the mistakeless 'redwoods' who dominate the Western field today. Anger at TV's quick-draw tin gods who stand behind a tin star or ten cents worth of

righteous anger and justify their skill in slaughter with a self-conscious grin or a minute's worth of bad philosophy... I feel the show is different because Dave Blasingame... is primarily a human being, not an ad man's hero. He is a working cowboy, with all the humour, tragedy and adventure that work represented during the 1890s. I wanted to create a truly realistic saddle bum, as honest



'The Westerner'

and real as I could. Unlettered - most of these guys couldn't read or write - not too bright, certainly unheroic. No hero, no lawman, no bounty hunter - a real saddle tramp."

1961

ROUTE 66 ('Mon Petite Chow', writer/director)

1962

DICK POWELL THEATER

('Pericles on 31st Street', director/producer/co-writer: 'The Losers', director/co-scriptwriter/co-producer)

"I'm a loser, we're all losers. The networks are full of winners that go along with the game, but we take pokes at the established mores, so we're the losers. These characters are an idealisation of what I'd like to be - always plunging in with enthusiasm and optimism, and always whipped by circumstances. That's the way it is with us losers, we win through losing."

1966

ABC STAGE 67 ('Noon Wine', writer/director) "It is my favourite piece of work."

Nominated for Best Television Adaptation by the Writers Guild of America, and for Best Television Direction by the Directors Guild of America. Peckinpah had been blacklisted from feature films for more than two years because of his rebellious behaviour, but this critical acclaim changed his fortune. "Suddenly," he recalled, "I was back in business again."

1967

BOB HOPE'S CHRYSLER THEATER ('That Lady is My Wife', director)

Peckinpah made revisions to the script but did not receive screen credit.

MUSIC VIDEOS

In 1984 Peckinpah directed two music videos starring Julian Lennon: 'Valotte' and 'Too Late for Goodbyes'. Hours before he died, Peckinpah lamented to his second wife, Begonia Palacios: "The last movie I made was only two minutes long."

ALIVE & ALIVE: THE
MIRACLE OF THE
ANDES
CITY SLICKERS
CHAPLIN
TOTAL RECALL
DANCES WITH WOLVES
PRIZZI'S HONOR
VERDI-LA TRAVIATA
REBECCA



DEATH BECOMES HER
BEVERLY HILLS COP 3
LENNY KRAVITZ - LIVE
PLANET EARTH

CLIFFHANGER
POTROUILLE DE
FRANCE
TERMINATOR 2
DRAGON: THE BRUCE
LEE STORY
GENESIS - LIVE THE
WAY WE WALK -
IN CONCERT
TOP GUN
LAST EXIT TO
BROOKLYN
PINK FLOYD - PULSE
PRINCE OF DARKNESS
CLIFF RICHARD -
ACCESS ALL AREAS
THE TOUR 1992
IN THE NAME OF
THE FATHER
PROPOSAL
MILY



1492: CONQUEST
OF PARADISE
A.W.O.L.
THE LOVER
MISERY
PET SHOP BOYS -
PERFORMANCE
HANDEL -
JULIUS CAESAR
TINA TURNER -
SIMPLY THE BEST
DEEP STAR SIX
AIR AMERICA
DIANA ROSS - ONE
WOMAN THE VIDEO
COLLECTION
SNEAKERS
THE AL DI MEOLA
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THE FIRM
RD TARGET
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PORTRAIT OF JENNIE
CABARET
THE PAGEMASTER

Was Sam Peckinpah a monster on the set of 'The Wild Bunch'? Or did he do only what was necessary to make the film? David Weddle talks with those who worked on the film and reconstructs the making of a masterpiece

WILD

● In the autumn of 1967 Sam Peckinpah was rescued from professional oblivion. It had been almost three years since he had directed a feature film; the back-to-back disasters of *Major Dundee* (which had run way over budget and bombed at the box office) and *The Cincinnati Kid* (from which he was fired after completing just four days of principal photography, allegedly because he had shot a shocking nude scene) had earned him the reputation as a half-mad fanatic of the Erich von Stroheim mould, showing little or no regard for the bottom line, which studio executives hold sacred.

But his fortune changed overnight when Kenneth Hyman took over as head of production for Warner Bros. Hyman had loved *Ride the High Country* (1961); and believed Peckinpah could produce another great film if given creative latitude. Hyman and producer Phil Feldman hired Peckinpah to direct *The Diamond Story*, an action/adventure vehicle for Lee Marvin, then a top box-office star in Hollywood.

While rewriting its screenplay, Peckinpah showed Feldman another script he owned the rights to: *The Wild Bunch*, a stark little Western by Roy Sickner and Walon Green. Marvin also had expressed interest in this, and Peckinpah felt it would be a good back-up project if *The Diamond Story* failed to gel. It told the story of the last days of a western outlaw, Pike Bishop, and his gang, and took place in Peckinpah's favourite fictional terrain: the no-man's-land of the Texas-Mexico border in 1913. Sickner had laid out the story which Green had expanded into a 96-page screenplay, though basic plot points never changed.

After robbing a Texas railroad office, the Bunch flees from a posse into Mexico. There they agree to steal a shipment of rifles from the American army for General Mapache, a Mexican warlord aligned with General Huerta in the war against Pancho Villa. But Angel, one of Bishop's gang, is himself a Mexican, and was born in a nearby village recently plundered by Mapache. Angel pleads with Bishop: "Let me have just one case of rifles from the shipment to give it to the people in my village; with guns they will be able to defend themselves." Bishop agrees and Angel's people get their guns, but Mapache finds out, captures Angel, and is

slowly torturing him to death when Bishop and the Bunch return to rescue him. 250 Mexican soldiers are ranged against four gringos. When the smoke clears the outlaws are dead, but so are Mapache and most of his army. The region has been liberated from a vile tyrant and the quartet of *bandidos yanqui* pass into legend.

Feldman saw the potential at once. The same yankees-south-of-the-border milieu had made *Vera Cruz*, *The Magnificent Seven* and *The Professionals* box-office smashes. There were enough meaty parts for an all-star cast to be assembled around Marvin – as in *The Dirty Dozen* – and there were plenty of slam-bang shoot-outs. He immediately sent a memo to Hyman: "My feeling about *The Wild Bunch*... is that it is a 'gasser'. It needs changes that Sam and I have discussed, and I think if you have time to look at it, it will prove to be the kind of picture with Lee Marvin that you would be most sympathetic with. Most importantly, it would seem that if you are available sometime next week for a meeting with Lee, Meyer [Mishkin, Marvin's agent], Sam and myself, there is a possibility that a multiple picture deal with Lee could be made to include *The Wild Bunch*, which he seemingly likes, and *The Diamond Story*, which we like."

Hyman had produced *The Dirty Dozen*, and agreed that *Bunch* had the makings of another big action blockbuster. He put it on the front burner, ordering Peckinpah to begin rewriting the script immediately. The characters needed fleshing out; in its present form the script was a slender thread of story on which a series of shoot-outs had been strung – not much more substantial than the average Spaghetti Western. But Sam assured Feldman and Hyman that he could spin this flax into gold. "Of all the projects I have ever worked on, this is the closest to me and as you already know, there is no other place in the world I would rather do it than here," Peckinpah wrote in a memo to Hyman.

What was it about this bleached-bone narrative that captured Peckinpah's imagination? For one thing it took place against the backdrop of the Mexican revolution. Thematically it bore striking similarities to *Villa Rides*, a feature that Peckinpah had worked on just months earlier: he was fired by its star, Yul Brynner, after turning in a first draft. A cynical band of money- ►



THINGS



JEFF SLATER COLLECTION



Almost the end: Ernest Borgnine in Sam Peckinpah's 'The Wild Bunch'

◀ hungry American mercenaries plunge into the middle of a civil war they can't hope to understand and, despite their best efforts, wind up converts to Villa's cause. And there was the glittery dark lure of writing about really bad men. Killers who go to Mexico.

"The outlaws of the West have always fascinated me," Sam would later explain. "They were people who lived not only by violence, but for it. And the whole underside of our society has always been violence – it will be and still is. It's a reflection of the society itself."

The challenge was making the audience care about these human beasts. As he grappled with this, Peckinpah used his frequent collaborator Jim Silke as a sounding board. "He needed someone to bounce ideas off," Silke explains. In meetings and telephone conversations, Silke helped Peckinpah focus on what the director wanted to do with the story (though he never did any writing on the script).

"The whole idea was, who would really do that – rob and kill, steal guns, and yet in the end give the guns away to the peasants and go back for Angel and die for him?" says Silke. "Sam said, 'What if we made a film where they really did that? What kind of guys would really do that? Walk in and sacrifice themselves like that?' Every guy that wrote a Western had at one time written that story, but it never works. The outlaw with a heart of gold: it's pure romance. So that was the intent from the outset, to make that story work."

In the Sickner-Green screenplay, Bishop's gang is chased into Mexico by a posse hired by the railroad they've robbed, and led by a former

member of the Bunch, Deke Thornton. Almost nothing had been revealed about Thornton's background. There was no hint of what his past association with the Bunch had been, or why he had now agreed to track them down.

Jim Silke recalls: "I said, 'Who is Thornton? We don't know who he is. We don't know what his relationship to Pike was or is. We need that back story.' Sam realised all of that stuff had to be built in, because you have a story of men changing. Thornton is the one who changed, they made him change. It was the whole idea of people changing, and others who refuse to change, and what that does to people."

The key to the characters' humanity, Sam realised, lay in their individual pasts. Slowly, the key themes began to emerge. Pike Bishop would be a man who refuses to change with the times, a dinosaur who's outlived his day in the sun. Deke Thornton, his nemesis, would be the man who had changed, the wild stallion now broken, saddled and harnessed by the system; the man who had sacrificed his vitality for the chance to go on living, who would survive physically but was spiritually dead. Peckinpah knew one more thing: the motivation for the Bunch's final sacrifice had to be more than mere tribal unity. It had to be more multifaceted than that.

Over the course of the story Bishop had to be forced to see himself, not as he liked to idealise himself – a man of his word who lives by his own code and therefore a man of true honour and integrity – but as he really was. Little by little he had to be confronted with reality: that his code was a sham, that he had violated it repeatedly whenever circumstances made this

convenient, that it had served only as a rationalisation to disguise the brutality and moral bankruptcy of his life. "By the end," says Silke, "at least one of them, Pike Bishop, comes to a recognition of who he is and what he has done." That final realisation would have to come near the end of the picture, it had to propel Bishop and the Bunch into the final bloodbath where they would ultimately be redeemed.

Running them like a platoon

By December of 1967 the screenplay was, fine tuning aside, finished. Then disaster struck. Marvin, who had expressed great enthusiasm for the project months earlier, pulled out. Paramount had offered him an incredible \$1 million to star in *Paint Your Wagon*. But Hyman liked the script so much that he decided the hell with Marvin, they'd get another star and make the picture anyway. William Holden was signed for a quarter of Marvin's fee, and Peckinpah lined up a strong supporting cast behind him. Ernest Borgnine, Edmond O'Brien, Warren Oates, Ben Johnson and Jaime Sanchez would play the other members of the Bunch. Robert Ryan took the part of Thornton. Strother Martin and L. Q. Jones signed on as the two most repugnant bounty hunters and Emilio Fernandez as the malevolent General Mapache.

The Wild Bunch was scheduled for 70 days of principal photography, with a budget of \$3,451,420, including an allotment for 225,000 feet of film. It would be made in and around the towns of Parras and Torreon in Central Mexico, the region where Pancho Villa had defeated the forces of General Huerta in 1913. Shooting began on 25 March, 1968.

"Sam spoke just barely above a whisper, or else at a shout," says Crayton Smith, the script supervisor on the production. Though he was only 21 at the time, Smith had already worked on three pictures for Warner Bros: *Camelot*, *Wait Until Dark* and *Bonnie and Clyde*. "Mostly it was whispering. Many people on the crew couldn't hear what he was saying, but were too terrified to ask him to speak up. Sam had been a Marine and went through boot camp on Parris Island; he ran his crew a lot like a Marine Corps DI would run his platoon. I think most everything that he did was calculated."

Gordon Dawson, the costume designer on the picture, had worked with Peckinpah on *Major Dundee*, and knew how demanding he was. Dawson thought he had anticipated every possible contingency this time, but Sam threw him a curve ball the first day of shooting. They were filming the scene where the bounty hunters swoop down on the main street of Starbuck after the opening shoot-out, to pick over the dozens of bodies sprawled in the dirt. Strother Martin arrived on the set in full make-up and wardrobe: several days growth of beard on his prickly face, skin coated in oily dirt, frayed clothes permeated with grime and the spillings of a hundred sloppily gulped meals. Peckinpah had approved his wardrobe weeks earlier, but now just before the cameras rolled, he scrutinised the actor from behind his mirrored sunglasses. As Dawson recalls: "Sam says, 'There's something wrong here. You know, he's just about right, but, Strother, there's

something... I want to make him a 1913 Hell's Angel. There's something missing, what can you do?' So I ran back to the wardrobe trailer. We're in this little village of Parras and all of the Mexican community turns up to watch the shooting, because they've never seen this kind of shit before. I thought, 'What the fuck am I going to do?' I had a bunch of nurses' habits and I saw a crucifix. I ripped the crucifix off the nurse's habit, I took a pair of needle-nose pliers, ripped the Christ off, threw it out, wrapped a fucking .38 cartridge around the cross, hit it with a blow torch, turned around and the entire Mexican village was looking at me with these distorted expressions. I thought, 'Oh shit!' and ran past them back to the set, and put it on Strother and Sam said, 'That's it!'

Sam's cameras were covering the action from a dizzying variety of angles. He shot 25,290 feet of film from 131 camera set-ups in the first six days alone.

Lou Lombardo had set up an editing room in Parras to begin assembling and cutting the film as Peckinpah shot it. He later recalled: "I had worked as an assistant cameraman on [such television series as] *Wagon Train*, *Tales of Wells Fargo*, *The Overland Trail* and a lot of other Western shows. When I first saw the dailies on *The Wild Bunch*, I thought the shots were too static. I was used to television, with the zooms and the moves. I asked Sam for a shot and he came unglued at me. I said, 'Well, if you don't want the shot, I guess you don't want it.' It was the scene with the kids torturing the scorpions and ants. I was talking to him out by the railroad tracks there in Parras, where the kids were, and I started to leave. He said, 'Where the hell are you going?' I said, 'I'm going back to the cutting room.' He says, 'Awe, come on back. Tell me that shot you think you fuckin' need.' And I told him, 'I got the Bunch riding the horses in this direction, but I don't have anything of the kids in this direction.' He said, 'All right.' Then the next day he said, 'I gave it to you on a camera arm.' He could have just panned the kids, but he did a whole travelling shot. He says, 'Is that OK?' I said, 'Yeah, that's OK.'"

The two quickly developed a close working relationship, so close that when the editor asked for additional close-ups of the bounty hunters on the roof to insert into the opening shoot-out, Sam gave him a camera and second-unit crew and told him to shoot them himself while Peckinpah moved on to other scenes.

In the opening sequence, a Temperance Union parade gets caught in the crossfire between the outlaws and the bounty hunters, and dozens of innocent people are killed. Peckinpah placed his six-year-old son Mathew and a little girl in the epicentre of the massacre, and filmed their shocked but fascinated reactions as people were blown apart all around them. "Dad had a hard time trying to get me to hug the girl," Mathew recalls. "He had to show me. I didn't want to hug this girl. I hugged her very stiffly, I wouldn't hold her close. He really tried to show me how to do it. I just wouldn't do it."

Many on the crew were shocked by Peckinpah's harsh treatment of his son, but he was just as tough on the other kids who appeared in the movie, especially those who had to hunch

around the pit full of red ants and scorpions. "Imagine this little pit with the ants: pouring the ants in, having the little kids grouped around and shooting for a day or two," says Howard Kazanjian, an assistant director on the production. "The ants didn't stay in the pit, they crawled out and started biting the kids and they'd get up and spoil the shot, and Sam would be screaming at them to get back down. It was terrible, that was my first indication of how cruel Sam could be at times."

"Smile!" He screamed as he forced them to huddle round the pit. "Goddamn it, laugh!"

"The one thing Sam drummed into me was: anything for the picture," says Gordon Dawson. "The end justifies any means. When you're on a Sam Peckinpah picture you believe that. The shot was all important. I mean, I did a lot of terrible things to justify the end of the picture."

Not everyone admired Peckinpah's go-for-broke approach. Especially bitter about it were those who suffered abuse in front of the entire crew, such as second assistant director David Dowell, whom Sam eventually fired. "Peckinpah certainly was one of the sickest people I've worked with," says Dowell. "I worked in the business for 20 years. He was one of the louisiest

shiny red automobile, and there were some doubts whether the coverage would cut together. The developed film had just returned from the lab in the United States and Peckinpah was waiting for word from Lombardo, who was assembling the shots in the cutting room. If the scene didn't work, it would have to be restaged for some additional camera angles.

Lombardo recalls: "Sam and Feldman and the ADs were going to meet that night to talk about reshooting it. So I'm working like a son-of-a-bitch over my Moviola. The door's behind me and it's open because it's hot out and sticky, there's no air conditioning and there's dust and shit. I'm working on the sequence and I finally figured it out. I looked up at my assistant, Bill, and I said, 'It works, goddamn it, I got it!' He said, 'Great!' Over by the door stood [assistant director] Cliff Coleman. He said, 'Oh, it works, huh?' I said, 'Yeah, I think so.' He said, 'You know we're meeting tonight about reshooting that.' I said, 'Well, I don't know, Sam's gotta see it.' He says, 'OK,' and disappears."

Fred Gammon, another assistant director on the picture, recalls: "We were in the production meeting that night. There was Sam, myself, and all the major crew members. We were talking

Costume director: "The one thing Sam drummed into me was: anything for the picture. The end justifies any means. On a Peckinpah picture, you believe that"

human beings I ever had the displeasure of having to be associated with. He was a tyrant, he was sadistic. It wasn't just because he was thoughtless, he loved to hurt people. It showed in every action that he did."

Barred from the cutting room

As shooting progressed, Lombardo worked around the clock in his editing room, assembling dailies and cutting and polishing various sequences under Peckinpah's supervision. Sam gave strict orders that *no one* could look at the sequences until he and Lou perfected them. Columbia Studios had taken *Major Dundee* away from Peckinpah after the completion of principal photography, and employed their own team of editors to butcher it. He had no intention of repeating that debacle.

By weaving together footage shot by a half-dozen cameras, each running at different speeds, Peckinpah hoped to disorient the viewers, to suck them into the middle of the bloody gun battles on the screen, to wrench them from elation to revulsion and back again, and thus force them to confront their own conflicted responses to violence. But in order to achieve that, he and Lombardo needed time to experiment, without interference from Warner Bros. So Sam had barred everyone from the cutting room, including the film's producer Feldman and William Faralla, the production manager. Phil Feldman gave Peckinpah his way – for the time being.

Halfway through the production a problem arose. Sam had just shot the scene in which General Mapache rides into Agua Verde in a

about whether we'd have to reshoot that sequence Monday. As I was asking Sam about it, Coleman was coming in and he heard me. He says, 'You don't have to worry about that for Monday, I was just in the editing room, the sequence is OK.' Well, I have never seen a man go absolutely berserk like Sam did. I'm telling you, I have *never* seen a man more violent!"

Lombardo: "It's evening, and we had to go into town to eat. It took me three weeks to get the makings of a martini in Parras – plenty ►



Interlude in civil war: 'The Wild Bunch'

◀ of vodka, no vermouth, but a stewardess finally brought me a little bottle of it. So now I've got my martini, and my assistant's driving me into town. We're going out this long dirt road, a tree-covered lane, to the highway, and here comes Sam, running by the car at 100mph, and here comes Cliff Coleman, who is 6'4", trying to catch him and can't. Cliff's yelling, 'NO, PARTNER! NO!' Sam goes up on the veranda of the hotel and around to where my room is, and the camera mechanic's. I thought, 'Shit, he's going to kill the camera mechanic, there was sand in one of the cameras!' It was so dusty you had to take the cameras apart every night and oil and reassemble them. The mechanic was a nice guy. I said, 'Shit, stop the car!'

"I jumped out of the car and I ran up on the veranda, and by that time Sam was making the turn coming back. I've got this martini in my hand and I said, 'Sam, what happened?' And he swings at me. I brought my hand up and he hit the fucking martini, it flew out into the weeds. I said, 'What the fuck's the matter with you?' He said, 'You showed Coleman that fucking film!' I said, 'I didn't show him nothing, man! I promise you I didn't show him nothing!' And eight stunt guys suddenly appear behind him. I said, 'Honest to God, Sam!' Sam says to the stunt guys, 'All right, fellas, go on back.' And he said to me, 'All right now, tell me about it.' So I told him the story. He said, 'Let me see the scene.' I showed him. He said, 'Fuck you,' and left. The scene worked, we didn't have to reshoot."

When Feldman wrote a memo to Peckinpah and admonished him for overreacting to the incident, Sam responded with a memo of his own: "I blew up because I had gone on the record with you, Faralla, Lombardo, that I did not want to discuss cut film until I had seen it. I was upset, more than upset – I was furious, and if Lou Lombardo had been in the room I would have probably done my very best to drop him instead of just dropping a drink out of his hand when I finally found him. Tell me, Phil, is Cliff Coleman going to tell me or you or Ken Hyman

whether a cut sequence works or not, or is Bill Faralla? I repeat, I need to look at the film first so that we may discuss it. It's a simple request, Phil, but I am adamant about it."

Coleman was sent home "on the bus" (more than 20 members of the crew would be sent home "on the bus" before it wrapped). No one else dared to venture into the cutting room without Peckinpah's permission.

The Wild Bunch finished principal photography in the last week of June, 1968 – ten days behind schedule. Its final negative cost would be \$6,224,087, almost twice the original budget. For 80 days Peckinpah had driven a crew of more than 100 men and women to the limit of their endurance and finally beyond, had seduced, inspired and terrorised his actors and crew to give more than they ever thought themselves capable of, and in so doing had driven himself to his highest achievement as a filmmaker. For 80 days he had thought of nothing else but the film. Now, suddenly, it was over. After the wrap at Churubusco Studios in Mexico City, he wandered off to an isolated corner of the sound stage and broke down.

Even Feldman, who'd fought a running battle with Peckinpah over the escalating production costs, had to admit all of the agony had been worth it. Peckinpah's cameras had captured something awesome. Feldman: "The glances and looks of the Bunch when they leave the whores and they're getting together to go off and die, had a feeling. I'm not sure I could name any other guy but Sam who could have put that detail in. It was all the minutiae of detail that made the picture great. It was the preparation for the final shoot-out that made it great: the last supper, only they ordered hookers instead of steak, the pleasure you get just before you go in to where they're going to drop the cyanide – that's what told the story, not so much the shoot-out itself. It's the surroundings, the lead-in and lead-out from the final shoot-out, that makes the difference.

"Many people have staged bloodier scenes

since that picture. Ralph Nelson did a movie [*Soldier Blue*] shortly after that down in Mexico that was bloodier than anything we ever contemplated, made us look like Mary Poppins. Anyone can do a sequence like that, disconnected from the story. The thing that makes *The Wild Bunch* is the connections, the quiet, contemplative moments between the bursts of gunfire. You sense the impending climax in each of the scenes. To me, to have a disconnected scene without the preparation of the audience for the scene – which is what happens in most of these action-adventures today, there's no motivation, there's no reason – is poor movie making. *The Wild Bunch*: I don't know of anybody but Sam who could have made that movie."

Peckinpah and his editors – Lombardo and Robert Wolfe (who worked without credit on the picture) – would labour for a year to mould the 333,000 feet of film, shot from 1,288 camera set-ups, into a two-hour-and-25-minute movie. By the time they were finished they had reshaped the language of the cinema. The gun battles at the opening and climax of the picture took parallel action, first refined by D. W. Griffith, to new and dizzying heights. It was the most creative use of montage since Sergei Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin*, and it changed forever the way movies would be made.

Music for killing to

Peckinpah hired Jerry Fielding to compose the musical score for the picture. The two had worked together before on an acclaimed television adaptation of Katherine Anne Porter's novella, *Noon Wine*. In a 1978 interview with Paul Seydor, Fielding (who died in 1980) gave a detailed account of his work on *Bunch*, and the intricacies of his craft: "In *The Wild Bunch*, Sam depicted the horrors of violence very forcefully. But there was a much more important priority as far as he was concerned and as far as I was concerned, which had to do with the relationship between two men [Bishop and Thornton], which was actually a right down love affair. Not a dirty one, but a real one. And a love affair on Sam's part with the ambience of the time and the place – that was what it was about. It was not about gunshots, open wounds, children getting shot. Even the battle was a ballet, in our minds it was a fucking ballet.

"I did an awful lot of pulling the other way in *The Wild Bunch*, of working against what you're looking at. There's a tremendous amount of right down Jewish-Mexican schmaltz in that score. I mean, if you listened to that score and didn't see the picture, you'd think it was a love story. I prefer to talk about it in this way: there is a poetic element. A writer does it with words, I'm doing it with inarticulate sounds which are a little more ambiguous."

The opening shoot-out, which included the title sequence, presented complex problems. The Bunch ride into Starbuck in army uniforms, leading the audience to believe they're 'good guys'. But within minutes they unsheathe their guns, rob the railroad office and blow away innocent townspeople as they escape.

Fielding: "The main title music of *The Wild Bunch* is in a cadence in 11-time. The music sets



Having made a decision: Ben Johnson, Warren Oates, William Holden, Ernest Borgnine

you up for the left turn. It was a question of understatement. It hints to the audience that something's wrong, but not what. If the music is too obvious and tells the audience that things are not what they seem to be, then when Holden walks in that railroad office and says, 'If they move, kill 'em!', they ain't gonna be shocked at all. I want the audience to think that the Bunch is really the cavalry coming through, although there are one or two strange things about it. The air is piling up with tension, it's like a volcano getting ready to blow and the audience thinks if anything's going to happen, somebody's going to shoot the Bunch. They certainly don't anticipate that the Bunch will be the perpetrators of a heinous crime.

"But there is a hint that something is wrong from the outset because the shot of the children playing with the ants and the scorpions is a sickie. I sat for four days and watched every foot of film they had on kids and ants and scorpions, because that's the story right there. It's sick little children, all sick, there was an albino, a blind one, one with a birth mark on his face. All with something wrong with them – that's the world watching the world destroy itself and gleefully enjoying setting fire to it and watching it suffer.

"That's a very significant piece of allegorical information, which there is no way to clarify. The audience is either going to get it or they're not. I begged Sam to leave it on the screen as long as he could, so that it stayed long enough to make people realise that he's telling you something, goddamn it!

"Now, the only thing I dared do was set up a feeling of portentous tension – which is done within the confines of the period, which means you can't get dissonant. So I used the lowest note that a bass can play; with enough basses it sounds pretty ominous, yet not spooky. The march [music] which occurs is a cadence, but you can't walk to it – it's a bar and six and a bar and five. It's a long cadence."

Though they butted heads many times over the subtleties of the score, Fielding came to respect Peckinpah's commitment to excellence. "It took us eight weeks to dub just one section of the picture," he recalled. "We were doing ten frames a day. You wouldn't believe it! *The Wild Bunch* is probably the best score I've ever done for a picture."

But when it came time to score the film's *dénouement*, where Thornton sits by the gate to Agua Verde as the refugees file past him, Fielding and Peckinpah had a knock-down-drag-out. Jerry had composed a dirge that gave the sequence an epic sweep. "At first Sam hated it," he told Seydor. "He nearly gave me heart failure over it. He'll do that."

Fielding patiently tried to explain why the music worked in the sequence, why the sequence absolutely needed it. But Sam responded to everything he said with the same chant: "I hate it!" Finally, Jerry picked up a chair and heaved it at the director. Ever alert, Peckinpah ducked and the incoming missile sailed past, crashing into the wall. "YOU FUCKING IDIOT!" Fielding screamed. "YOU KNOW NOTHING ABOUT MUSIC!"

Sam smiled, his hazel eyes twinkling

warmly. "That's it! That's the anger I've been trying to get from you this entire picture! That's the anger I want to hear in your music!" The dirge stayed in, without a note of anger added.

"Sam gave in," Fielding's wife Camille recalls. "He knew Jerry was right, he just didn't want to have to admit he was wrong."

By the time he finished his work on the picture, Fielding had scored an hour and 10 minutes of music for *The Wild Bunch*, more than there is in *My Fair Lady*.

A masterpiece or pornography?

In May 1969, Warner Bros held three public previews of *The Wild Bunch*, at theatres in Kansas City, Fresno and Long Beach. Audience reaction was volatile. In Kansas City, people flooded into the lobby to lambast the manager and demand that local authorities confiscate the film. One woman wrote a letter of protest to her congressman. In Fresno, a group of nuns settled like a flock of fussy doves into a row of seats just before the movie began, only to fly up the aisle minutes after the opening shootout erupted, habits fluttering behind them as they raced into the street.

The reaction cards filled out by audience members were far from reassuring. 60 per cent strongly disliked the film, only 17-18 per cent rated it outstanding, the remaining 22-23 per cent fell somewhere in between. But whether people praised the film as a masterpiece or condemned it as pornography, the response was passionate. The answers scrawled on the questionnaires were not those of bored patrons

Jerry Fielding: "It was a love affair on Sam's part with the ambience of the time and the place. It was not about gunshots, open wounds, children getting shot. Even the battle was a ballet, in our minds it was a fucking ballet"

hastily fulfilling a tedious obligation. The response sheets were covered from top to bottom with manic handwriting. Positive or negative, *The Wild Bunch* definitely struck a chord.

At almost any other time in history such a high percentage of negative responses would have caused the studio brass to hit the panic button, take the movie away from the director, drastically recut it, or dump it on the market with no publicity. But Hyman was convinced that *The Wild Bunch* was a great film and he stood by it. "Kenny was on our side all the way," says Lombardo. "He didn't care, he loved the movie. He loved making movies."

Many other members of the Hollywood film industry shared Hyman's enthusiasm. Though many had doubts about whether the picture would make money, most felt it was a stunning, groundbreaking work of art.

Warner Bros was sold to Steve Ross shortly before *The Wild Bunch* went into general release in July of 1969, and Hyman was replaced by a new head of production, Ted Ashley. Peckinpah had lost his godfather. *Bunch* did respectable business during its first two weeks in release, but fell far short of the breakaway hit Warners

had hoped for. Ashley took a look at the disappointing numbers and complaints from exhibitors that it was too long, and decided that it needed to be cut by at least 10 minutes.

Phil Feldman executed Ashley's orders while Peckinpah was in Hawaii editing his next picture, *The Ballad of Cable Hogue*. Sam would not learn of the cuts until it was too late, and the betrayal ended his mercurial partnership with his producer. Feldman removed the scenes that he had objected to throughout editing: the flashbacks that explained Bishop's past failures and his relationship to Thornton, some crucial campfire dialogue between Bishop and Dutch (Ernest Borgnine), a giant battle between Mapache's forces and those of Pancho Villa, and some atmospheric scenes at Angel's village.

Editors were dispatched to the projection booths of theatres in New York and Los Angeles to cut the scenes out of the prints, and cutting instructions went out to Warner Bros distribution exchanges in other parts of the country. As prints of the film came back to the regional shipping houses, in transit from one theatre to the next, employees hacked out the indicated scenes. Sometimes they followed the instructions properly, sometimes they bungled the job, sometimes they didn't bother to make the cuts at all, sometimes the prints were already so chopped up from poor projecting equipment that it hardly mattered. Within a matter of weeks Peckinpah's version of *The Wild Bunch* could no longer be seen in his own country, and floating around the nation's theatres were countless bastardised versions.

It would be 25 years before Warner Bros finally restored the director's cut of Peckinpah's masterpiece, thanks to intensive lobbying by Martin Scorsese, Robert Harris and a number of other scholars and film-makers. Yet even in its mangled form, the film had a profound effect on an entire generation of Americans. Paul Seydor, Peckinpah scholar and editor on Ron Shelton's *White Men Can't Jump* and *Cobb*, remembers the first time he saw *The Wild Bunch*: "Every once and a while you encounter a work of art that permanently affects the way you see the world. That was one for me. It gave the fullest, richest, most comprehensive vision of life – I mean, obviously there's a huge omission, because it really is about men, women have only ancillary roles. But, you know, that puts Peckinpah in an American [artistic] tradition – not one that we should necessarily be proud of – but it certainly puts him in a solid American tradition which includes two of our greatest works of fiction, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and *Moby Dick*." *An NFT retrospective, 'Blood of a Poet: the Cinema according to Sam Peckinpah', runs from 3 October to 2 November, starting with the director's cut of 'The Wild Bunch', which opens nationally on 6 October*

THE WILD BUNCH THE SCRIPT

David Weddle
introduces
two pages of
Peckinpah's
drafts

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ANGLE ON SLOPE

The rock is loose and the footing extremely difficult as they start down in single file. Sykes is last, he leads his own horse and a pack animal.

Suddenly Sykes slips and loses his footing. He falls forward pulling the two horses down with him. Unable to control his slide he collides with Tector who is next in line. Tector's fall starts a chain reaction in which all the men slide to the bottom of the hill.

Picking up speed they tumble to the bottom and land in a giant cloud of dust. There is a profusion of coughing and swearing as the men and animals get to their feet.

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GROUP SHOT

Tector stands and looks around for Sykes.

TECTOR

You damned old idiot!

He picks up a small stone and throws it at the old man who is coughing spasmodically. The other men are brushing off their clothing and looking over their horses. Pike grabs Tector and swings him around.

TECTOR (raving)

I hate old men... Having that old idiot around is gonna get us killed. Get rid of him!

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ANGLE WITH PIKE IN FG

Pike has gotten to his feet. He groans with the pain in his back, then he straightens up and turns to mount the horse. Placing his foot in the stirrup he stiffly starts to swing on. The leather breaks and he falls under the animal. Landing on his back he lets out a loud shriek.

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REACTION OTHERS

The other men look down at him. They are all mounted except for Dutch who is holding his horse.

With the kind permission
of Warner Bros

Left: an undated draft of the sand dunes sequence in which Tector Gorch wants to kill Freddy Sykes, but is stopped by Pike Bishop. Peckinpah has added the lines by Bishop: "We don't get rid of nobody - we stick together - just like it used to be. When you side with a man - you stick with him". Bishop's handwritten dialogue continues on the back of the sheet: "- if you can't do that..." The transcription of these rewrites begins half-way up the page:
(Tector stands and screams at Sykes.)
TECTOR You damned old idiot!

(He picks up a stone and throws it at the old man, who is hit and falls backward. Pike grabs Tector and swings him around.)

PIKE Leave him alone.

TECTOR (raving) I hate old men... that old idiot is gonna get us killed. Get rid of him!

PIKE (his anger growing) We don't get rid of nobody - we stick together - just like it used to be. When you side [with] a man - you stick with him [page over] (shaking him) if you can't do that you're worse than some animal - you're finished - we're finished - all of us.

Right: On the back page of an undated draft of the script, Peckinpah writes the final scene of the movie. The bounty hunters are riding out of Agua Verde with the bodies of the Bunch draped over their horses. But Deke Thornton is not with them. He crouches in the dust at the gate of the town, holding the reins of his horse. As the bounty hunters pass, Coffey looks down and speaks to him. The scene concludes (sideways on the page) with the reappearance of Sykes and the peasants from Angel's village. Sykes is offering Thornton a chance to join Villa's

(to them too)
 you sure you don't come in?

than on
in GSA -

coffee shops + sitting out of a half full typewriter
B. takes sides off of football by the others who
ignore the other as much as possible as he
yours there -

Dir's to

Get Vicksen (Lotus Aftershave)

then to - has not moved then from the

Distance covered 3 Rifle shots -

then to ~~intercept~~ units themselves

15 p Earth - then under Father Brock

Due to

1st Entom (Karl (J.))

The sun has past the mountains & the
light goes a cold wind kills dust above
than the pit-scent of the valley, that
stands back in off.

Some History was learned by the class 12/18

Provide the Cont. Hunter + a hand-to-hand probe
in the Comp. and sit watching him. The
Cont. Hunter the Great Hunter house
+ the Suckers all are true to the 1000

[illegible]

Taken above bridge than
than from ~~Hollister~~ ~~that~~ sensitive his house
than from + Bul Cow S. ~~some~~ know it.

revolution. Peckinpah takes a stab at the film's last lines:

COFFER (to Thornton) You sure you ain't coming?

THORNTON I'm sure.

(Coffer shrugs and drinks out of a half full tequila bottle, rides off, following the others, who ignore Thornton as [illegible] he ignores them.)

Dissolve to:

EXT. VILLAGE (LATE AFTERNOON)

(Thornton hasn't moved. Then from the distance come 3 rifle shots - Thornton sits up and waits then there is a fourth - [illegible] settles back.)

Dissolve to:

EXT. VILLAGE (EARLY EVENING)

(The sun has past [sic] the mountains and as the light goes a cold wind kicks dust across the empty [illegible] of the village. Thornton stands, looking off. Some distance away, Sykes, Jose, Manuel the goat herder, and a handful of Angel's Indian compadres sit watching him. They are loading the bounty hunters' horses and the sacks of gold are tied to the saddles.)

SYKES Didn't expect to find you here.

THORNTON Why not – I sent 'em back – that's all I said I'd do.

SYKES They didn't get far. (Then) You the one that shot him?

THORNTON Don't know - Does it make any difference?

SYKES Nope – What are your plans?

THORNTON Drift around down here - try to stay out of jail.

SYKES Well come along - we got some work to do - (*riding away*) it ain't like it used to be but it's better than nothing.

[Illegible line of description]

Thornton half grins, unties his horse, then moves and follows. FADE OUT. THE END.

SEXUALITY

AND
THE
HERITAGE



AUSTIN MORRISON

Unorthodox heritage: Emma Thompson as Carrington in 'Carrington'

Films such as the acclaimed 'Carrington' and 'Orlando' are apparently sexually radical. But perhaps they are less so than the collaborations of Merchant-Ivory? By Claire Monk

● Pastoral Sussex, 1915. A vintage locomotive, framed in its own steam, draws into a pretty rural station. The sole passenger to alight is an effete figure with a shapeless tweed hat, wire spectacles and the kind of huge, rigid beaver's-tail beard once attached to George Bernard Shaw. Instantly unburdened of his luggage by a porter, the bearded eccentric is offered the choice of a taxi or a horse-drawn fly. "I don't think I need to make *too* hasty a decision, do you?" he responds campily, weighing up the respective charms of the two specimens of rustic rough trade on offer as his drivers. Meet Lytton Strachey, author of *Eminent Victorians* and famous Bloomsbury Set queer.

Carrington is the directing debut of playwright and Oscar-winning *Dangerous Liaisons* screenwriter Christopher Hampton, from his own script. It takes as its subject the intense, complex, sexually open 17-year relationship between Strachey and the ambiguously gamine painter Dora Carrington, 13 years his junior, whom on their first meeting Strachey mistakes for a "ravishing boy". The film's central focus is the sexual and emotional life of a woman who rejected her female first name, and wore male clothes. *Carrington* suggests she preferred an almost sex-free and often lonely intimacy with Strachey (someone who liked knitting and boys better than women) to the thrusting and tantrums of phallic heterosexuality. Though Carrington remained emotionally detached from her numerous young male lovers, her attachment to Strachey can be measured by the fact that she shot herself shortly after his death from cancer in 1932.

The above opening scene sets the tone for the film. *Carrington* treats its audience to the visual, literary and performative period pleasures associated with that critically despised but highly exportable British product, the heritage film, while pointedly seeking to distance itself, through various strategies, from the supposed conservatism these films were so often condemned for in the 80s and early 90s: particularly their innate escapism, and their promotion of a conservative, bourgeois, pastoral, 'English' national identity. These distancing strategies range from archly explicit dialogue ("Ah, semen," Strachey sighs. "What is it about that ridiculous white secretion that pulls down the corners of a man's mouth?") to a camera which restlessly circles its human subjects, as if under pressure to prove that it is not lingering on period spectacle. But above all, there's *Carrington*'s choice of subject: the explicit preoccupation with 'unconventional' sexualities – gay, bisexual and active female heterosexual – and the specific focus on the Bloomsbury Set, a nexus of modernist writers, artists and thinkers whose polysexual, aesthetic and political experimentations signified a deliberate break with Victorian values. The political significance of this has not gone unnoticed by the *Daily Mail*: back in June, it used *Carrington*'s upcoming release as the hook for a two-page propaganda piece blaming the Bloomsbury Set for everything from non-mone-

tarist economics to the break-up of the family.

Carrington's preoccupations locate it as the latest in an emerging strand of period/literary films with a deep self-consciousness about how the past is represented: the implied reaction against heritage suggests they be termed 'post-heritage'. The strand can be dated to early 1993 and the international success of Sally Potter's *Orlando*, which perhaps helped destigmatise the pleasures of costume and period spectacle; by 1994 the trend had been consolidated not only in Britain (with the release of Stephen Poliakoff's underrated *Century* and Brian Gilbert's less successful *Tom & Viv*) but globally, with the appropriation and renewal of the costume/literary film by Jane Campion (*The Piano*) and Martin Scorsese (*The Age of Innocence*), both non-European directors not previously associated with such projects.

What most unites the post-heritage films is undoubtedly an overt concern with sexuality and gender, particularly non-dominant gender and sexual identities: feminine, non-masculine, mutable, androgynous, ambiguous. In an increasingly international production context, in which the label "British film" becomes ever more meaningless, the insistence on filming left-field sexual narratives can simply be seen as a strategy of product differentiation – from other European cinemas, even other European heritage cinemas, as much as from Hollywood. But nonetheless the transgressive sexual politics of the post-heritage film places it in genuine opposition to a 1990s Hollywood-defined mainstream. From *Orlando*'s transportation of its hero/ine through two genders and four centuries, the preoccupations of the post-heritage films would be found unthinkably deviant, both sexually and commercially, by the Hollywood of *Basic Instinct* and *Disclosure*, the Hollywood of predatory and punitive sexual politics, of Sadeian women and pro-family messages. (Indeed, Hampton's script for *Carrington* was written 17 years before it finally found finance.)

But paradoxically the post-heritage films revel in the visual pleasures of heritage, even as they seem to distance themselves: one of *Carrington*'s ironies is the respectful conservationist 'authenticity' with which it reconstructs the home and clothes of a group of bold modernist experimenters. Similarly, the post-heritage film's upfront sexuality owes rather more to its her-

itage predecessors than the post-heritage filmmaker may like to think. *Carrington*'s reception at Cannes earlier this year highlights this: awarded the *Prix Spécial du Jury à l'unanimité* not for Hampton's (directionless) direction but for his (highly literary) script, the film has so far been praised not for its specifically cinematic qualities but for its "fidelity" (though to biographical fact rather than literary source) and above all for its *acting*. Serial award-winner Emma Thompson is good as the androgynous tomboy *fatale* Carrington; but it's Jonathan Pryce's screen-stealing performance as Strachey, fussy, selfish and waspish, that brought home the Cannes Best Actor award.

However, Pryce's triumph is at the expense of the narrative's ostensible focus on Carrington herself. Hampton not only simplifies the tortuous bisexual entanglements of the Bloomsbury Set but – by an irony – heterosexualises them. The fact that Carrington had important and pleasurable affairs with women as well as men is completely ignored, while precedence goes to a series of rough screen couplings between Thompson and this year's pick of young male British acting 'talent' (Rufus Sewell, Jeremy Northam, Steven Waddington, Samuel West). In contrast, the physical details of Strachey's relationship with Carrington are treated with such ambiguous discretion that their relationship might never have been consummated – though historically we know it was. Likewise Strachey's physical relationships with men: there is one moment where Strachey and Ralph Partridge (the army major Carrington reluctantly marries, played by Waddington) seem to be lovers – and another where it seems equally certain they are not. It is strange that so sexually explicit a film should leave us so uncertain who is sleeping with whom: this was never so, for example, in James Ivory's not-so-explicit gay love story (and heritage film) *Maurice*.

Nevertheless the film hardly portrays male heterosexuality sympathetically: Carrington's screen lovers are a typology of its archetypal flaws (the aggressively phallic and rabidly jealous working-class Jewish painter Mark Gertler, played by Sewell; the self-absorbed romantic travel writer Gerald Brenan, played by West, and so on). Unfortunately, Carrington's own sexuality and psyche remain opaque throughout. The camera's lingering focus on Thompson's empty gaze during each sex scene only highlights the fact that we know nothing of what she thinks or feels, while hinting at a woman caught, unsatisfactorily, between the Bloomsbury creed of polymorphous sex as liberation and the emotional need for a reciprocity Strachey cannot give. The pair's relationship seems most truthfully encapsulated in the peculiar moment when she hands Strachey a gift of a pen-wiper embroidered with the words "use me" and tells him – happily – "That's how I feel, Lytton."

Carrington is not the first post-heritage film to fall short of its radical sexual ambitions: even the infinitely more imaginative *Orlando* ultimately failed to cinematise the playfully oscillating ►



Bloomsbury icon: Jonathan Pryce as Lytton Strachey

◀ sexual and gender indeterminacy of its hero/ine, though this was the precise quality that made Virginia Woolf's novel so captivating and so sexy a fantasy. The irony is that the richest pleasures of ambiguity, androgyny and sly transgression are to be found not in the up-front thematisations of the post-heritage film, but in two (perhaps the two) quintessential 80s heritage films, James Ivory's first, low-budget adaptations from E. M. Forster, *A Room With A View* (1985) and *Maurice* (1987). Untouched by the post-heritage urge to make an issue of their self-consciousness, these two films nevertheless treat the journeys of personal and sexual identity which are their centres with an unpretentious humanity that itself constitutes a serious (and, to state the obvious, Forsterian) politics of sex and self, while offering plentiful post-modern pleasures: of the performative, of self-referentiality and irony.

Perhaps it is because these are the personal journeys of a very young woman (Lucy in *Room*) and a gay man (the eponymous Maurice) that anti-heritage critics (predominantly male and, as far as can be deduced, straight) have been able to ignore the sexual politics and pleasures of these films. That sexuality is central to their appeal has nevertheless been long understood by those who do enjoy them. "Vintage car, vintage train, vintage plane... Vintage boys," the *Tatler* noted of Charles Sturridge's Evelyn Waugh adaptation *A Handful of Dust* as early as 1988; and a 1990 edition of Channel 4's gay magazine *Out on Tuesday* had great fun editing together suggestive imagery and yearning gazes between boys from *Maurice*, *Another Country* and elsewhere.

The rarity of the spectacle of the male body, outside films specifically aimed at a gay audience, clearly places these movies somewhat outside the mainstream; it also makes them likely sites of anxiety for straight male spectators. It will surprise no one that *Maurice*, a gay love story, offers the audience such a spectacle, but the idea that *A Room With A View* is simmering with feminine, queer and ambiguous sexualities will seem strange to many. This is, after all, a film that was once recruited by the *Daily Mail* for one of its periodic attacks on 'permissiveness': the paper crowed proudly, but with sorry inaccuracy, that the film's "overt sex is restricted to a single screen kiss exchanged by fully clothed lovers". However, *Room*'s PG-certificate display of penises makes it something of a cinematic landmark: in hetero sex scenes in mainstream movies it is still a near-certainty that extravagant measures will be taken to conceal the male organ at all times (*Carrington* being no exception). The comic horseplay of the context of the penis-display encapsulates the friction between innocence and codified suggestiveness through which the film's sexual subtext is played out: it's in the famous nude bathing scene, where the confused heroine Lucy (Helena Bonham Carter) and her snobbish, sexually unsuitable fiancé Cecil (Daniel Day Lewis) find her uninhibited brother Freddy (Rupert Graves) and the local vicar the Reverend Beebe (Simon Callow) romping in a pond with her rival suitor George (Julian Sands) – the suitor whose kiss, during the visit to Italy which comprises the first part of the film, prompted her erotic awakening.

Lucy's double in the film is her brother

Freddy, who repeatedly acts out her unspoken desires; she may fiercely rebuff George and his physical advances, but Freddy invites him to bathe the moment they are introduced. This doubling endows the narrative with a bi-sexed androgyny and implicit homoeroticism, opening up multiple viewing pleasures. The transgressiveness of the bathing scene is sealed by Beebe's participation (Callow being famously gay); his only logical motivation for accompanying the two young men to the pond is voyeurism, a trait not only already established for him in the Italian section of the film but generally rife among the English characters on the Italian trip, most notably the "Lady novelist" Miss Lavish.

In contrast with *Room*'s queered, gender-scrambled, deeply ambiguous celebration of female desire, *Maurice*'s corresponding perversity is the straightness of its treatment of the sexual and emotional self-discovery and transformation of its young gay Edwardian protagonist (James Wilby). Coupled with *Maurice*'s restrained and even dour aesthetic, this straightness seems to me to be a political strategy, as if Ivory considered the 'normalising' of gayness, by removing its visual and behavioural codes, to be the duty of a liberal-humanist campaigning film. However quaint this tactic may seem, it is not without some currency – in making gay men seem 'just like everyone else', *Maurice* seeks to demonstrate beyond argument that the same human rights apply to them as to everyone else.

Maurice was sneered at by some critics for its softly-softly approach to gay physicality, and its eloquent focus on gay emotions and desire was memorably dismissed by *Time* magazine as "twits twittering". Nevertheless this focus gradually accumulates and unleashes a far more intense erotic charge than the sexually explicit but emotionally evasive *Carrington*. Recall the potent layers of fantasy appealed to by Maurice's seduction by the gamekeeper Alec Scudder (Rupert Graves): it's the fantasy of sexual release (Maurice's first with another human being) at the hands of a near-stranger who appears singlemindedly through your bedroom window as if summoned by your own unconscious in the midst of a dream, "like a genie out of a bottle," as one commentator put it. Consider too the S&M charge of the pair's subsequent game of cat and mouse: love letters that could be blackmail notes; the way Maurice's emotional sadism and Alec's humiliation ("You shouldn't treat me like a dog") function as a perverse courtship.

Maurice's most radical ingredient, though for many improbable, may be its near-magical



Freer spirits: Merchant-Ivory's 'A Room with a View'

happy ending – eight years after its release, there is little reason to challenge its co-screenwriter Kit Hesketh-Harvey's claim that it is "the only time in a major film that the homosexual hero is allowed the chance of happiness". Yet amazingly even this aspect of the movie has been widely misrepresented. While most reviewers had concentrated on the more platonic first half of the film, the majority of film reference guides give the impression – usually by omission – that Maurice's story ends, as tragic gay narrative convention leads us to expect, in tears. One synopsis even bizarrely claims that Maurice descends, like Dorian Gray, into promiscuity and depravity!

Perhaps it is such gross misrepresentations and failures to appreciate their intent that have led Ivory, his producer Ismail Merchant and their regular screenwriter Ruth Prawer Jhabvala into a seeming retreat from such complex and polymorphous sexual politics in more recent period films. Awkward non-hetero sexualities likely to stir ambivalent feelings in critics were notably absent from their two subsequent British literary adaptations, *Howards End* (1992) and *The Remains of the Day* (1993). The torrent of praise which greeted *Howards End* in particular – some of it from sources previously noted for their loathing of heritage – may have had more to do with fashion than politics. Straining towards a post-heritage aesthetic in its melodramatisation of the spectacles of property and landscape, *Howards End* seems to me to turn Forster's most critical novel into a complacent Tory tract on the pleasures of property – a more conservative transformation than its derided heritage predecessors ever managed.

1995's *Jefferson in Paris* marks Merchant-Ivory-Jhabvala's first foray into (variously) the eighteenth century, big politics, big history, the French Revolution, and (most problematically) the psychology and sexuality of slavery in America. It is an oddity with such complex ambitions that it would be unwise to rely on it to draw conclusions about the future shape of heritage cinema, post-heritage cinema or even Ivory's next film. Alleging that US president Thomas Jefferson had a sexual relationship with one of his slaves, Sally Hemings, who bore him children from the age of 15, Ivory's most (theoretically) transgressive film is hindered by its near-total lack of convincing sexual chemistry – but it may nonetheless be the most intellectually ambitious film he has made. Neither heritage nor post-heritage but a throwback to an earlier, colder art-film aesthetic which offers little easy gratification, *Jefferson* fluffs its treatment of its black characters appallingly, but puts gender aggressively on the agenda. Its coup is to draw parallels between Jefferson turning a blind eye to carnage in his support of the revolution in France and his championing of 'universal' freedom in the abstract while withholding *liberté, fraternité* and *égalité* from blacks and women – his teenage daughter as well as his slaves. Needless to say, *Jefferson* has been dismissed in Britain as nothing but period spectacle. If *Carrington* is taken more seriously than this flawed but demanding political think-piece, the anti-heritage critics may have missed the point yet again. *'Carrington' opens on 22 September and was reviewed in last month's issue*

Sight and Sound and Women in Film and Television present

Women Making Movies Roadshow

WOMEN MAKING MOVIES

Showcasing some of the very best work by British women directors working in both television and cinema, the Roadshow will be launched in London at the National Film Theatre, 6/7 October, and will then tour six regional film theatres ending in Cardiff, 2 December

LWT and Granada Television are major sponsors of Women Making Movies and we are also grateful for the support of the Foundation for sport and the arts



LWT/TF

**Friday 6 and
Saturday 7 October
National Film Theatre
London**

Friday 6 October, 8.45 – 10.45pm

Antonia Bird, the much acclaimed director whose successful career spans both BBC television and Hollywood, will launch the Roadshow. She will talk frankly with Diana Quick about her career and show clips from her work including the television series 'EastEnders' and 'Casualty', her award-winning films 'Safe' and 'Priest' and her first Hollywood feature, 'Mad Love', which opens this November

**Saturday 7 October, 10.30 – 5.00pm
10.30am**

This day long event will begin with a screening of the very best of British shorts selected by a panel of women critics. They range from **Anna Negri's** vibrant 'All at Sea', to the macabre tale told by **Coky Giedroyc** in 'Reconstruction' and to **Susannah Gent's** witty film 'The Bather'. The directors will discuss with the audience what it is like working in the film and television industries

2.15pm

An exciting choice of animated shorts will be screened including **Frances Lea's** outrageous 'Oh Julie' and **Maybelle Peters'** bluesy 'Mama Lou'. The animators will be present on stage to introduce their work.



3.45pm

Molly Dineen, the outstanding documentary film-maker will screen an exclusive preview of the first 50 minute episode of her new documentary 'In the Company of Men'. She will talk about her work which includes the production and direction of 'The Ark', the powerful four-part series shown on BBC2, which explored London Zoo in crisis

Tickets

Friday evening £3.95 (concs £2.75); Saturday only £11.95 (concs £8.50); full weekend ticket £13.50 (concs £9.50).
NFT Box Office 0171 928 3232

Regional Events: Glasgow to Bristol

The Women Making Movies Roadshow will visit the following venues which will screen a feature film, a selection of the films being shown in London, as well as some work by local women directors

**Cinema City, Norwich
Saturday 21 October
11am – 4pm**

This 'Women Making Movies' event is part of the 'Cinewomen' Festival which is running from the 19/22 October, for booking and information call: 01603 622047

**Cornerhouse, Manchester
Saturday 4 November
1pm – 5pm**

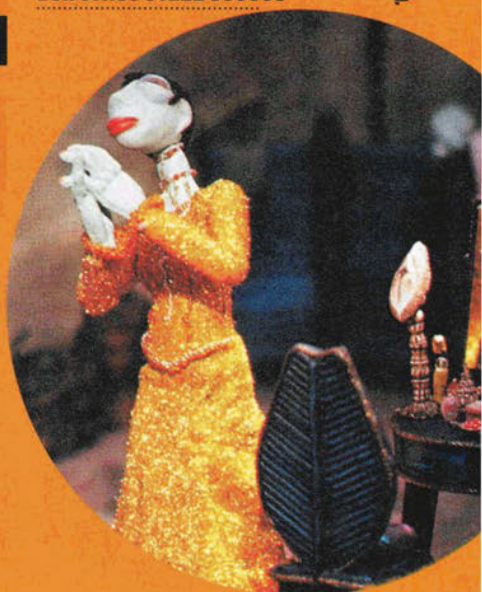
Box Office 0161 228 2463

**Glasgow Film Theatre
Saturday 11 November
10.30am – 5.00pm
Box Office 0141 332 8128**

**Watershed, Bristol,
Saturday 18 November
Box Office 0117 925 3845**

**Tyneside Cinema, Newcastle
Saturday 25 November
Box Office 0191 232 8289**

**Chapter Arts, Cardiff
Saturday 2 December
Box Office 01222 399666**



'Mama Lou'

'Land and Freedom', an epic film, confirms Ken Loach as Britain's greatest contemporary film-maker, argues Ian Christie

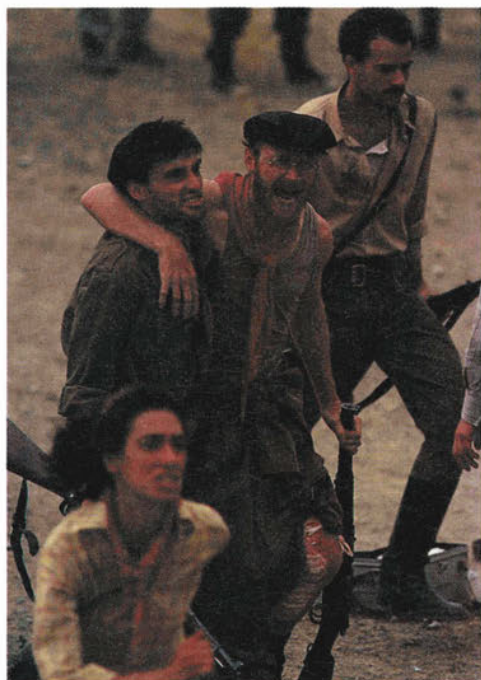
FILM FOR A SPANISH REPUBLIC

George Orwell had a low opinion of most movies: "They go on and on with the same treacly rubbish, and when they do touch on politics they are years behind the popular press and decades behind the average book." But he would surely have admired Ken Loach's distinctly un-treacly *Land and Freedom*, which looks and sounds for all the world like a fictional descendant of Orwell's classic *Homage to Catalonia*. Except that there's no Orwell figure, no middle-class observer-interpreter to guide us through the labyrinth of the Spanish Civil War. Instead we're adrift with Ian Hart's unemployed Liverpudlian youth, here modestly self-effacing after his cocky John Lennon in both *The Hours and Times* and *Backbeat*.

Remarkably, considering his Continental reputation, this is Loach's first European co-production, although a typically frugal one. Period setting and battles, even guerrilla-style ones, don't normally come cheap. But *Land and Freedom* gave no hostages to compromise with a budget of only £2.7 million, which producer Rebecca O'Brien raised through Parallax Pictures, Loach's UK producer since *Riff-Raff*, Spain's Messidor Films and Wim Wenders' Road Movies, with extra funding from Eurimages, British Screen and the UK Co-production Fund, and pre-sales to a raft of European broadcasters. Indeed the funding aptly mirrors the film's politics. The Spanish revolution drew idealistic volunteers from across Europe to learn an inspiring if bitter lesson; and, like Jacques Rivette in his equally anti-rhetorical *Jeanne la Pucelle*, Loach has eschewed false heroics and the consolations of elegy. This is a sharp new historicism in action – and a timely argument for pan-European funding in the post-GATT era.

The bitter lesson learned by so many in Spain in 1936-7 had less to do with fascism than with the discovery that official communist policy was seemingly more concerned to root out heresy on the Left – generically labelled 'Trotskyism' – than unite against the common enemy. Ah yes, betrayal. It wouldn't be a Loach movie, would it, without the ritual indictment of an official Leftist doing the dirty on the rank and file? In *Days of Hope* it was Ramsay MacDonald and the Labour Party selling out the strikers of 1926. And even in the social debris of *Raining Stones* there's a venomous cameo of a Labour councillor seen leaving a community centre with indecent, careerist haste.

For all his evident gifts as a teller of powerful tales, Loach has the reputation, especially when working with his most regular writer Jim Allen, of a Trotskyite die-hard, obsessed with sell-outs. The real enemy, it seems, is the enemy within – the man who calls himself your comrade. But in the case of Spain, this is no minority, sectarian view. It's the majority verdict on how Catalonia's revolutionary vanguard of socialists and anarchists, the POUM (Workers' Marxist Unity Party) militia, was crushed by an unholy alliance of Moscow-directed



A workers' war: *'Land and Freedom'*

Communists toeing the Popular Front line and bourgeois appeasers hoping to win support from the democracies. When, in the harrowing climax of *Land and Freedom*, Communist officers of the republican army order conscripts to shoot front-line so-called Trotskyist militia if they refuse to disband and see their leaders arrested, it's the primal scene of the non-Stalinist left – the Western counterpart to the purges and show-trials that were then consolidating Stalin's grip on Russia.

Orwell's problem back in the late 30s was like that facing today's Balkan eye-witness, trying to overcome public confusion and fatigue. In *Homage to Catalonia* he moved faster than any film-maker would dare to plunge his readers into the heady atmosphere of Spain in 1936. His opening image is of an Italian volunteer in Barcelona's Lenin Barracks, who greets the Orwell-figure as a comrade; the warm human presence of what was already turning into history only a year later.

Loach's and Allen's task is less to challenge received opinion than to persuade an audience of the 90s that the Spanish Civil War was more than a colourful episode in Spain's slow awakening to the modern world, or a footnote to literature. They too want to transport us as quickly and evocatively as possible to late 30s Spain. But equally they want to remain rooted in the present, rejecting the *trompe l'oeil* of historical fiction as costume drama. Loach has made only two previous excursions into 'history' in 20-odd films. *Days of Hope* was boldly polemical, a revisionist view of British Labour history; *Black Jack*, based on a book by the children's author Leon Garfield, was hampered by grossly inadequate resources in its recreation of the eighteenth

century, although it remains a unique un-classic view of Britain's past. But with a subject as resonant as Spain, how to short-circuit History – "the operator, the Organiser", in Auden's great poem 'Spain, 1937' – and find a route from the 'post-socialist' present to the past?

Their solution is simple and precise. A young woman, Kim, finds her grandfather collapsed in his Liverpool flat and calls an ambulance. The whole texture of fractured families and bleak housing estates registers in seconds. When the old man dies on his way to hospital, the girl's shock and pain prepares us for the abrupt casualness of life and death in revolutionary Spain. Back at the flat, she finds a suitcase which contains all his mementoes of Spain – newspaper cuttings, letters, photos and a red scarf containing pebbly earth. From these, the film will conjure an idealistic young Communist's journey to self-discovery.

Reflexivity is not something normally associated with Loach's clipped naturalism, yet it is a Left film-show that inspires the 20-year-old David to forsake unemployment in Liverpool and set off for Spain. All perfectly correct, for the Spanish War was the first in which non-commercial, or 'independent', film played a vital part in fundraising, recruitment and mobilising opinion. We share a terse briefing on film about Franco's challenge to the elected government, a rallying speech by a Spanish comrade, a hasty farewell to his girl – and suddenly we're on board a Spanish train heading for Barcelona, with David discovering that class solidarity can overcome ignorance of the language and the lack of a fare.

Like Orwell, David falls in with the POUM by chance and soon finds himself serving in the front line with their pitifully under-armed militia. What so impressed Orwell, with his Eton and Burma background, was the anti-authoritarian ethos of the POUM. Men – and women, who could serve on equal terms in the first heady days of the militias – elected their officers and felt free to argue with them. To military eyes it might look a shambles, but through David's eyes we see what Orwell came to value: true comradeship born of shared beliefs, dangers and, occasionally, pleasures.

As always in a Loach film, the personal interacts closely with the political, and events follow an emblematic pattern. There's a fine balance between the didactic and the properly dramatic, which requires characters that convince us of their spontaneity and autonomy. During his first real battle, as the militia unit encircles a church held by Francoists, David's hesitation leads to the death of Coogan, a fiery ex-IRA volunteer. His clumsy attempt to comfort Coogan's Spanish lover Blanca ends with her fierce, grief-stricken embrace; and so their destinies first become intertwined. The village skirmish ends with a burial and the moving affirmation of shared beliefs; and the emotion,

Loach shows Spain as he did the English countryside in 'Kes' and 'The Gamekeeper', without any tourist excess, as an arena of action

conveyed as much by the revolutionary songs woven into George Fenton's restrained though evocative score, spills directly into the following scene, which is a full-scale political debate, convened by the POUM, on whether or not the liberated village should collectivise its land.

The scene is eerily reminiscent of similar debates staged in Soviet films from the late 20s onwards. One tenant farmer – clearly the “kulak” – argues that he should be allowed to go on working his own land, while the landowner's estate should be given to those who previously had nothing. Lawrence, an American volunteer and a Communist, agrees with him and puts the case for moderation and pragmatism. We are clearly meant to smell a rat in Lawrence's fluent reasonableness. But the peasants around him, apart from the “kulak”, want to press ahead with immediate common ownership; and the rest of the unit, including Blanca, who translates for David, agree. Collectivisation is carried by acclaim.

This is a long scene which will probably seem to some anachronistic and axe-grinding. It's certainly possible to note that terms like “Stalinist”, heard increasingly often after this in the film, were rarely used at the time compared with “Trotskyist”, a word never uttered (somewhat improbably). But these are only quibbles. For the film's great merit is that it brings fully alive a fierce political debate on which thousands, ultimately millions, of lives hung. Even if these volunteers have some benefit of hindsight in their terms of argument, the debate is in essence exactly how Orwell outlined the POUM position in 1937, here transposed from the cities, where trade unionists were arguing for workers' control, to the countryside.

Loach resists any temptation to romanticise the Spanish landscape. He shows it as he did the English countryside in *Kes* and in *The Gamekeeper*, without any tourist excess, as an arena of action. But there is an unmistakable poignancy to the image – which follows the debate – of the small militia column marching boldly across the vastness of the country. This shot underlines as no words could the scale of the challenge they face, showing them as heroic or foolhardy, depending on our point of view. Loach and Allen don't hide their own beliefs, or claim a spurious ‘balance’, or even strain to point up contemporary relevance (despite some cuttings about the 1984/5 Miners' Strike glimpsed in David's suitcase). They want to show vivid, believable characters in situations which invite choice and commitment, and what makes men and women political rather than merely self-interested.

Orwell wrote to Cyril Connolly from Spain: “I have seen wonderful things and at last really believe in Socialism, which I never did before.” The fictional David, already a Communist, writes in one of the letters found by his granddaughter (which provide the framing narration), “I'm not

the man I was... I can see further.” He sees, as Orwell did, how Communism had come to mean compromise, deceit and tyranny. Socialist fighting socialist, instead of their common enemy. When an injury brings him to Barcelona in time to witness the repression of May 1937, it is Blanca who provides the catalyst – emotional and ideological – for his conversion to a more radical socialism.

Seeing with one's own eyes is the recurrent theme. When David hears callow government troops repeating slander about the militias, he challenges them; then tears up his treasured Party card in disgust, before setting off in search of his old militia unit. He finds them and takes part in another bloody battle – a pyrrhic one that recalls Orwell's experience, of having to give up a hard-won position for lack of support. Reinforcements eventually arrive, but turn out to be government troops, come to disarm the now-outlawed POUM. Lawrence is one of their officers, and this betrayal so outrages Blanca that she challenges the bewildered troops. In the confusion, she is shot and resistance crumbles. David takes her body to be buried in her village, and the 30s and the 90s are linked as his granddaughter throws the Spanish soil he took from her grave into his own.

The film's final message is defiantly optimistic. Kim reads a few lines from William Morris' ‘Join in the Battle’, which she found among David's papers, and joins some of the older men present in giving a clenched fist salute. The spirit of Spain's heroic anarchists and Marxists may be dormant in the Britain of 1994, but it isn't dead.

Nor is European cinema, if it can still produce an epic as lean and provocative as this. With Rosi, Saura, Bertolucci and Angelopoulos all involved in increasingly exotic or personal themes, there has been a notable absence of truly political cinema in Europe. Compared with the opulence of much heritage film, *Land and Freedom* may look positively austere. Yet it is a willed austerity, first wished upon Loach by working for television, then developed as a spare, economical language of cinema during the 70s, with such early masterpieces as *Kes*, *Family Life* and *The Gamekeeper*. It has stood Loach in good stead as his career has blossomed in the 90s, after nearly a decade in the wilderness.

It seems important to insist that it is cinema, however elliptical, despite Loach's own dogged modesty about his ambitions and the fact that, like all European film-makers, he depends on television funding. I remember a Channel 4 executive insisting that *Riff-Raff* was too rooted in the recently-ended Thatcher era to be of any interest to cinemagoers. Yet across Europe it drew audiences and won acclaim and a European Film of the Year prize. In Britain it was seen only in BFI cinemas. There are interesting questions of definition and perspective here. If the urban chaos of *Riff-Raff*, *Raining Stones* and *Ladybird*, for all their

sharp and topical drama, hardly seems the stuff of entertainment in Britain, this speaks volumes about those who define its parameters here.

Language has always been important to Loach. He once told me that he thought speech could be more concise, more revealing than images. However naturalistic, his dialogue is always selective and typical. Here, true to his principles, Loach has Spaniards speak Spanish, except when they're translating for the benefit of foreigners. The resulting mix of accents and languages becomes a vital ingredient in the film's passionate internationalism – a reminder that there could be a workers' as well as a bosses' Europe.

After the politically tendentious *Fatherland*, perhaps best seen as a casualty of the late Cold War, *Land of Freedom* provides a first real chance to see how his aesthetic works in a foreign context. Crucially, the film has already had an enthusiastic reception in Spain; not least because it is a film that no Spanish film-maker would have attempted. And it seems to have struck a deep chord elsewhere in Europe, touching on a vital moment in its history in a way that is neither self-consciously artistic nor merely documentary.

This has less to do with visual style than with Loach's basic conception of cinema as social experience. Rejecting star casting, he deliberately mixes professionals and non-professionals to create a varied human texture. He shoots in sequence in real locations whenever possible, giving out the script in daily instalments, all to maintain spontaneity. In a cinema increasingly dependent on the often specious drama of police procedurals for its ‘realism’, and comic-strip fantasy for its escapism, Loach is one of Britain's – and indeed Europe's – few major directors who still believe in making human-scale movies we can relate to and argue with as equals, peopled by recognisable rather than merely fantastic characters. It is the tradition of Renoir, Prévert and Visconti, the Italian ‘neo-realists’ after the war, the Czechoslovakia of the mid-60s. Realist, certainly, but also combative, quirky, passionate and anti-authoritarian.

The fact that Loach's films have been winning major prizes across Europe for 25 years, ever since *Kes* triumphed at Karlovy Vary in 1970, seems only to confirm local industry suspicions that he's “not one of us”. He's not. Like Orwell, whose spirit pervades *Land and Freedom*, he is that puzzling, unfashionable combination of revolutionary socialist, scrupulous artist and Englishman – not in any Tory sense, but as someone determined to see both the best and worst in this “mongrel island”. English intellectuals, as Orwell complained, prefer to get their ideas and their art from abroad – hence no doubt the lack of local acclaim for our greatest contemporary film-maker.

Land and Freedom opens on 6 October and is reviewed on page 51 of this issue

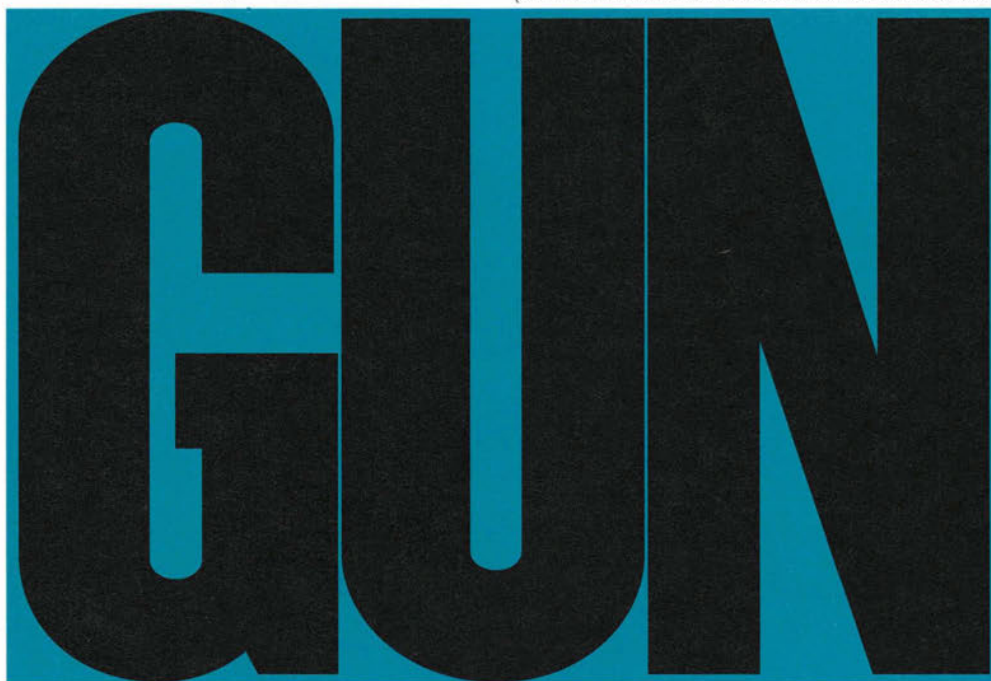
● The cinematic transition from the bloodless death to the crimson ballets of the slow bullet-fest is generally dated, however casually, to the release of *The Wild Bunch* in 1969. Its opening and closing gun-battles paid attention to the detail of bullet impacts in a sustained and stylistic manner rarely seen before. Death was no longer simply about Right shooting Wrong, Good triumphing over Bad: in *The Wild Bunch* it is spectacular, empty and nihilistic. Everyone loses. The pleasure is in witnessing the process of losing.

Gunfire battles were sometimes spectacular and excessive before this point; indeed, to a certain extent cinema and gunfire had always been intertwined. Guns and movies have been twin obsessions of American culture in the twentieth century, and both have mythic status. The movies represented glamour and excess, guns represented the Law and its democratic aspirations: as the Wild West proverb has it, "God created men, but Samuel Colt made them equal." Since the outlaw Barnes fired his Colt Peace-maker at the audience in *The Great Train Robbery* (1903), gunfire in films has continued apace, through the final shoot-outs of Howard Hawks' *Scarface* (1932), the gunfights of the Western, the casual gun-toting of film noir, right up to Peckinpah, De Palma, Tarantino and Woo.

Perhaps cinema and guns were made for each other. In both, the apparatus is mechanical, chemical, rhythmic. They share some terminology (the shot, the magazine), a point-and-shoot rationale, and a historical moment: in the late nineteenth century, the development of the fully automatic Maxim gun (mounted on a tripod) coincided with the first showing of the Lumières' films. If Hollywood cinema is fundamentally built around the drive of causal relations (this happened because that did) the gun also embodied a cause-effect apparatus (he bleeds because I shot him). It is precisely the rationality of this causal momentum which seems to disintegrate at the end of *The Wild Bunch* and in other modern gunfire sequences, such as those of *Bonnie and Clyde*, *The Godfather*, *The Getaway*, *Dillinger*, *Magnum Force*, *Taxi Driver*, *Assault on Precinct 13*, *The Long Riders*, *Blade Runner*, *Scarface*, *The Terminator*, *The Year of the Dragon*, *Full Metal Jacket*, *Lethal Weapon*, *Die Hard*, *State of Grace*, *Nikita*, and *Reservoir Dogs*. In various ways in each of these films (if sometimes very different ways) the shooting is no longer a means to an end but an end in itself.

Obviously there needs to be some qualification here. Modern gunfire should not be equated with everything Peckinpah did after *The Wild Bunch*, nor should one pretend that there have not been films since in which the gunfire remains subordinate to character and plot development. I'm talking about an influential stylistic tendency which emerged during the 60s, which may indeed have been a culmination of earlier styles and forms (such as those of Spaghetti Westerns or the new forms of realism that European art cinema provided). But it is also clear that *The Wild Bunch* marks a departure from what came before, a change in the conventions of movie gunfire (just as the conventions of the car chase and the sex scene changed). The 60s ushered in a greater realism

Cinema has always been fascinated with guns. But something seemed to happen in the 60s that made movies gun-crazy in a new way. What kinds of pleasures do viewers – especially men – find in the line of fire? By Jason Jacobs



in the depictions of death and injury. In part, a more liberal climate was a factor. But gunfire sequences also reflected and incorporated anxieties produced by the assassination of President Kennedy and the Vietnam War, events which provided a newly graphic and realist context.

The assassination of JFK brought a new immediacy to issues of bullet injury. The ballistic puzzle of JFK's death raised issues of range, calibre, entrance and exit wounds to the level of national importance: if the assassin was shooting from behind, why was Kennedy's head thrown back? The idea that bullets did not necessarily travel in a straight-line trajectory entered popular currency: a slug could travel in and out of the body, bend, expand, ricochet. According to weapon and type of bullet, bigger or smaller wounds could result. The Zapruder footage, screened on US national television in 1975, graphically showed the spectacular difference a frangible bullet could make compared to a regular one. One second Kennedy is shot in the neck but still together, the next his head is peeled open in a mist of brain and gore.

The Vietnam War had a different impact. The television reporting of firefights in the jungles of Indochina regularly noted the sense of confusion and frustration that US soldiers felt at the absence of a clearly identifiable target.

Who is the enemy? What are we shooting at? Why? Such second-wave Vietnam movies as *Platoon* and *Full Metal Jacket* regularly stage this confusion in their gunfire sequences.

With these two events, the representation of gunfire was required to become both more visceral and out of control to be realistic. A wincing gunfighter nursing a flesh wound on his shoulder is no longer realism: life is messier than that. *The Wild Bunch*, its final holocaust especially, aimed to show you what it was really like to get shot.

However its realism operates not despite its heavy stylisation but largely because of it. Peckinpah used every cinematic technique in the book for its famous ending. Fast cutting between firing and bullet impact, snap zooms (sometimes into unfocused abstracts of red on

white) crosscutting between the slow-motion, bullet-ripped, blood-squirting leaps of Mexican soldiers – and Warren Oates as Lyle psychotically spinning the Browning machine gun around and firing. Close-ups of blood exploding from flesh, close-ups of roaring guns, close-ups of faces screwed tight in agony, and all the time the symphony of bullet report and men screaming. Peckinpah keeps the screen ferociously busy with the dynamics of explosion (walls, bodies, guns) with a cutting rate more rapid than MTV. It is the founding bullet-fest, a heavily mediated *mise en scène* of industrial barbarism. And yet it captured – more precisely than anything before – the reality of gunfire as an excessive and bloody confusion, in which it is increasingly unclear who is shooting at whom and where the bullets are coming from.

This confusion is also achieved technically. Peckinpah uses a vast variety of camera angles, and lenses with long focal lengths to give a flattened perspective to the carnage, suggesting a suffocating proximity between the combatants. Blood, bullets, Mexicans and bandits appear to shoot and die almost on top of each other. Like Kennedy's death, bullets come from nowhere and without reason, and like the battlefields of Indochina, a desperate and crowded confusion prevails. Hence it is the *active media-*

tion of gunfire and bullet impact in this movie which supplies the meaning of the sequence, even if that meaning is painfully nihilistic.

However disturbing, the sequence is also exhilarating. Aside from the ferocious stylistic fireworks, exactly where the pleasure in the witnessing of such agony originates is difficult to identify – but a few notions suggest themselves. The first is that the sequence is an early example of the gradual transformation of modern Hollywood cinema into a pure thrill machine, offering sensation before story, the cause-effect narrative engine becoming (at significant points, in various ways and to varying degrees) subordinate to the spectacle. Seduction by spectacle, providing sensuous and visceral pleasures, is now considered characteristic of many contemporary Hollywood films (though some

Boiled the two cop heroes, Chow Yun-Fat and Tony Leung, are working their way through some hospital corridors, leaving a war-crime's worth of dead bad guys in their wake. Their squib-soaked progress is filmed and choreographed with a steadicam in one take: sometimes the sound and action groan into slow-motion (usually to extend a wounding frenzy), then groan back up to normal speed; the two even get into a lift and start cleaning out the next floor before we get a cut. Some dislike Woo's extended and bloody depiction of cops shooting bad guys, bad guys shooting cops, cops shooting cops, usually point blank with a gun in each hand, and few grenades to spare. As with those who hate Techno music, the fundamental misunderstanding is that it's all the same, just banal repetition: once you've seen

Lyle and Tector (Ben Johnson) dead, their leader Pike Bishop (William Holden) finally succumbs to the amount of lead drilled into his bleeding body. Dutch (Ernest Borgnine) clammers over the carnage towards him, weeping: "Pike! Pike!" – and then dies next to his friend. It is a tender moment because one feels that Dutch was about to express his love for his friend, to hold him tight and tell him, "It's OK, we'll die together." It's corny, but after all the four of them have been wearing their wounds like fluid brooches: they've earned the right to cry out, to scream, to weep, even if the price of that expression is terminal. Such intimacy and close physical contact between wounded men carries a powerful cultural message: it's OK to touch me now – I'm bleeding, I'm dying. Would Mr White (Harvey Keitel) tenderly comb Mr Orange's (Tim Roth) hair in *Reservoir Dogs* if Orange wasn't bleeding to death?

But this is only part of a broader pleasure, a pleasure which I think is less gender specific and more universal than it might at first seem (and this is my third suggestion for such pleasure's origins). It is connected with a modern fascination, centred on the body as a site of both perfection and decay. On the one hand we are told that our bodies are 'at risk' from disease, viruses, smoking, junk food and ageing; on the other, and in response, we are encouraged to 'take care of ourselves', to eat healthy food, to exercise, to give up smoking and aspire to the perfect body. If the responsibility for this is ours, so is the anxiety. A hitherto healthy body riddled by gunfire graphically reproduces this anxiety; what's more, it celebrates the abdication of responsibility for the body itself. So the pleasure gained from watching gunfire sequences is bound up with issues of control and its loss. This is strikingly illustrated in the standard shot routines of these sequences. Mastery and power (the cool handling of high-tech weapons) are directly contrasted with the loss of control over the body, the messy exit of blood and the involuntary convulsions. For example, in *Reservoir Dogs*, Mr White shoots two cops in their car. We are given a shot of White, cool, collected, powerful, firing a Smith and Wesson 645 in each hand; in the next shot we are given a chaos of injury, exploding glass and flesh, shrieking cops. This quick transition between mastery and vulnerability is certainly the characteristic trajectory of male orgasm, and there are further correspondences: a 'powerful weapon' is brandished, its contents released; there's an analogous cause-effect chain, in that the beating spurt of orgasm has its equivalent in the gushing of the bullet impact and consequent involuntary body movement. But one should be wary of the cliché which equates all specific cinema thrills to sexual pleasures: because control and its loss has a far more significant meaning in the real world.

This is best illustrated by those gunfire sequences in which the shooter is also the wounded. In *The Wild Bunch*, as noted above, a shot and bleeding Lyle screams as he spins around the machine gun, spraying destruction indiscriminately. One gets the acute sense that the gun is controlling him, that he couldn't let go if he wanted to. The technology has over- ▶



critics regard it as an infantile characteristic).

In gunfire sequences, what constitutes the spectacle is not simply the amount of gunfire released, but the visible impact on the body. The special-effects bullet-impact squib has a dynamic of its own, an attraction as the spectacle of visible injury. Sometimes it seems that a pumping artery lies just beneath the material of the victim's clothing, and the bullet operates like a lance to a boil. Alternatively, there is a more messy and explosive form where the 'boil' itself detonates outwards in wild and runny rivulets of blood and stringy gobs of gore. The 'Odessa steps' ending of De Palma's *The Untouchables* offers some designer versions of these squibs: where each slo-mo detonation has a shiny liquid texture, as if Armani himself had sewn them, as accessories, into the fabric.

It is the cumulative effect of such spectacles – the sustained provision of visual and kinetic motion – which makes good gunfire sequences so enjoyable. John Woo's Hong Kong action movies are exemplary in this respect. Woo has said that he choreographs his gun battles with the precision of musical numbers: a Peckinpah on an inspired drug-bender, Woo uses every technique and every type of squib to deliver some of the most sustained and unlikely gunfire sequences on film. At the end of *Hard*

one guy shot, why show the other 12 dozen? Those who like both *Orbital* and John Woo know that more is more, that repetition is part of a cumulative dynamic, that no part is ever the same as that preceding it: it is the constant and unbelievable accumulation of impact and firepower that makes a Woo film like *The Killer* akin to an all-night blood-and-bullets rave.

As my adoration of Woo might suggest, the pleasure of gunfire is also somewhat gender-specific, which leads to my second suggestion for the origin of such pleasures. Gunfire sequences offer particular pleasures for men, pleasures which often cannot be found elsewhere. Just as important as the shooting in this *Hard Boiled* sequence is the emotional relationship between the two cops; indeed, such relationships are often fundamentally bound up with the gunfire itself. In Woo's *A Better Tomorrow II* one character can only stop weeping and win Chow Yun-Fat's respect and love when he finally picks up a gun and starts shooting at something. Many men find the end of *The Wild Bunch* an exhilarating sequence, but it is also a tender one. Somehow the pain and agony of gunfire legitimates a kind of male intimacy usually outlawed in the Hollywood film, or else awkwardly displaced onto dramas of male camaraderie (as with much of Hawks). With

◀ whelmed its user. Similarly, at the end of *Taxi Driver*, Travis Bickle (Robert De Niro) is also shot and bleeding, but the logic of his on-board arsenal propels him to continue the killing until he runs out of ammo. Again, the gun becomes the agency of control to the extent that Iris' (Jodie Foster) cry, "Don't shoot him!", becomes an impossible request: Travis evacuates the brains of the brothel keeper over the wall. In *Reservoir Dogs*, Mr Orange, lying in a lake of his own blood, empties his entire weapon into Mr Blonde, but continues pointing it even when it's empty, as if the gun itself was urging him to continue. Automatic gunfire creates automatic people.

But even this explanation doesn't give the entire picture. More than just the technology powers these characters. They have a heroic quality too. Tim Roth's blood-soaked Orange defiantly shooting and Warren Oates' Lyle swinging on the machine gun have something iconic about them, something which recalls the paintings of the Crucifixion or of St Sebastian. The fifteenth-century painter Andrea Mantegna's powerful paintings of Sebastian depict him as shot through with arrows, bleeding, and looking heavenwards for redemption beyond the agony of the material world. But neither Orange nor Lyle have any such recourse. They can only turn to their guns and fire back.

And herein lies the profoundest desire and deepest pleasure in these gunfire sequences: in the will to fight back, to gain mastery over one's life even in circumstances so desperate and agonised. They give us a highly stylised spectacle in which are played out genuine dramas of mastery and loss. If these do reflect male pleasures and anxieties, this is because in a patriarchal world men have more to lose. The passivity and weakness associated with women are a direct reflection of the systematic way they have been denied access to that power. But there is nothing positive about passivity, no strength in lying back to wait for the next bullet.

Society continually offers us examples of how we cannot do anything about our situation: famine, disease, war, interest rates, inflation and job security. We seem to have less and less control over what happens to us, however often we are told to take responsibility for it. It is because most of us know what it's like to be under fire (if only metaphorically), and what the yearning to shoot back feels like, that it feels so damn good to watch gunfire in these films. The desire to shoot back is positive, and even subversive, at a time when our first instinct might be to keep our heads down and not make trouble. Marx argued that the fight against capitalism begins with "the weapon of criticism and the criticism of weapons". That is, in critically and actively fighting back, even as the odds and guns are ranged against us. Pleasure in gunfire sequences simultaneously reflects our recognition of our vulnerability and our desire to fight back. As the screenwriter Charles Higson explained in his recent *Obsession* (S&S August), after his first youthful viewing of the end of *The Wild Bunch*, "I wanted to go out in a blaze of glory, I wanted a Gatling gun, I wanted to be pierced by a hundred bullets."



▶ THE GODFATHER

In the early 70s, special make-up effects pioneer Dick Smith invented the 'mole', a means of placing a squib under a mock layer of skin: it was first used here in *The Godfather* (Smith later worked on the ending of *Taxi Driver*). The bullet bursting in skin is not only more realistic, but more visibly painful, more surgical. Sonny Corleone (James Caan) is ambushed by a Thompson-toting brigade of mobsters.

Sonny stays alive for an unfeasibly long time – long enough to show the sustained brutality the bullets subject his body to. The extended spectacle of his death, culminating in a superfluous close-range shooting and a kick in the head (cut from television versions), shows us the violent end of a man (it also sells the film). In life Sonny was explosive material, a testosterone-fuelled grenade. His death is equally overblown.



◀ SCARFACE

"Say hello to my little friend." Tony Montana (Al Pacino) launches a rocket grenade at the South American hit squad. Spectacle overcomes realism. His M16 is fitted with a flash suppressor, but it acts like a flame-thrower. Gunfire must be visible. In Hawks' 1932 original, Paul Muni begs the cops not to shoot him. In De Palma's, Montana, powered by rage, coke, and bloody-minded refusal, repeatedly riddled by gunfire, screams for more, "I'm still standing, come on! Is this the best you can do?"



RONALD GRANT

▼ TERMINATOR 2: JUDGMENT DAY

This gunfire sequence is one of the most spectacular: Arnie fires a big gun, and the environment explodes – cars, shrubs, the ground. Cops scatter for cover. Then a moment of comic disbelief as the Terminator's electronic scan notes "Human casualties: 0.0". A surgical strike. The film was released in 1991, during the Gulf War, when the myth of the 'smart' techno-weapon was in fashion: these

weapons that achieved their objectives without killing people. However spectacular, this sequence resonates with such claims. The new paternal Terminator represents the US, narrowly protective of its interests and justifying the most elaborate violence as harmless. He uses a Vulcan mini-gun, designed for use on helicopter gunships – used by the US to 'police' the Somali capital Mogadishu in 1993. "Human casualties (estimated): 4000.0".



MAX VADON

▲ HARD BOILED

By the mid-80s a long barrel and a big impact seemed passé, even sexist. For the 'new gun' era, high capacity – staying power – was more important than size. In 1985 the US army adopted the Beretta 92, a high capacity (16 rounds) semi-automatic

handgun, and Hollywood became awash with them: 'Lethal Weapon', 'Die Hard', the John Woo films. High capacity autos fire many bullets, quickly. Who needs a revolver, however awesome when you can 'spray and pray' with a Beretta 92 or

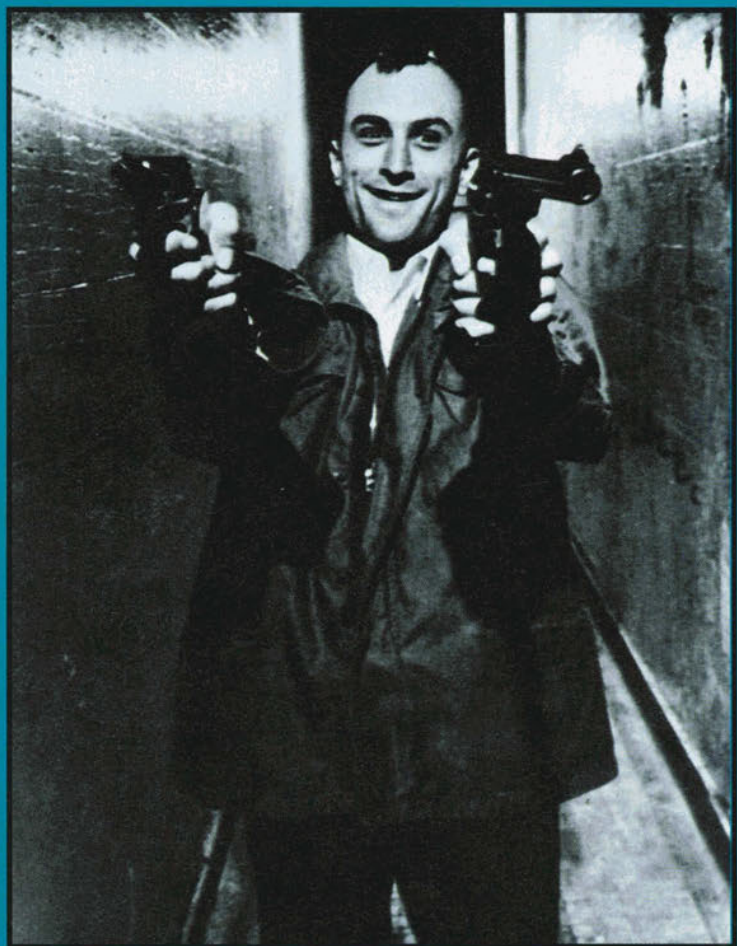
a Glock 19? An automatic pistol offers the rapid movement of the slide, the spinning egress of cartridges. As Woo's films have demonstrated, with more bullets, and a faster firing-rate, the gunfire spectacle can be endlessly extended.

▼ TAXI DRIVER

Different bullets and guns have different impacts on the body. The rise of the gun as star, the damage as co-star, can be dated to 'Dirty Harry' in 1971: "This is a .44 Magnum, the most powerful handgun in the world. And it could blow you head clean off." Larger calibres and longer barrels became fashionable, their

disturbing association with machismo played up. In Peckinpah's 'The Getaway' Rudy (Al Lettieri) carries an eight-inch Colt Python .357 Magnum with a ventilated cooling rib on the barrel, which is regularly stroked by his girlfriend. In 'Taxi Driver' Travis buys a .44 Magnum because he's been told of its power by a satanic fare,

played by Scorsese himself. The connection with sexual violence is made horribly explicit: "You ever see what a .44 Magnum pistol can do to a woman's face? Fucking destroy it. Just blow it right apart. Ever see what it could do to a woman's pussy, now that you should see. You must think I'm pretty sick, right?"



RONALD GRANT

▲ THE GETAWAY

The pump-action shotgun holds a special place in gunfire sequences: noisy, messy and indiscriminate, with the added aural bonus of the re-cocking action every shot. Doc McCoy (Steve McQueen), a bank-robber on

the run, is 'made' by a shop-owner who calls the cops. In response, McCoy walks next door to the gunshop: "I want a shotgun. 12-gauge. Pump... That's fine, wrap it up." But instead of blowing the cops away he blasts their car. Which updates the script-

writing maxim that a gun seen in the first reel should be used in the last, except the eventual use of the weapon we've been teased with is only this. The car's chassis tears and buckles, gruesome inklings of its effect on the human body.



MAX VADON

▲ FULL METAL JACKET

Sniper fire should be accurate and deadly; the film technique used here is. This sequence (several soldiers wounded by a Vietcong sniper) is shocking, but

mainly because it tries so hard, using graphic and excessive simulation of bullet impact. The squib detonations are filmed in slow motion from a low angle, giving a scientific precision:

unpleasant without being engaging. The solemnity and the refusal to acknowledge the cinematic pleasure of carnage (however disturbing that recognition is) leaves the viewer cold.

Eternal yearning

I saw *Barry Lyndon* at the time of its first release and despite seeing it only once until a few years ago, it resonated as strongly throughout my adolescence as any other film. For all of its intricately detailed artifice, the film struck right at the heart of my childhood and family experience in the most direct and emotional way. Films rejected on first release often prove the most interesting and timeless. Consider from this period *Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid* and *Night Moves* or, from a decade later, *The King of Comedy* or *The Right Stuff*, all films best described as equivocal and ambivalent. They belong to a mini-tradition of powerfully intelligent, mainstream pictures which became marginalised due to commercial failure or a temporary lack of comprehension on the part of studio, critics or public. Other than that, the common ground between them is that each in some way involves its protagonists in a struggle with a culturally inscribed heroic ideal, and each is unable to resolve that relationship except through failure. Given the direction of our popular culture it's a fair bet that's the reason people stayed away from them.

In opposition to the feel-good faction, I have always thought failure to be one of the most pleasurable dramatic spectacles. *Barry Lyndon* is a film that is misunderstood. The critical consensus seems to be that by this point, Kubrick was losing sight of the 'emotional' and 'human' elements in his dramas in his insistence on period accuracy and/or technical and compositional perfection. (A typical review of *Barry Lyndon* by Chris Petit in *Time Out* read: "A triumph of technique over any human content... singular lack of drama, perspective or insight.") This label has stuck. Whichever way you look at it, Kubrick is a 'control freak,' and his films are either brilliant studies of 'dehumanisation' or the products of a colossal, self-defeating perfectionism.

None of his films suffer more from this generalisation than *Barry Lyndon*. Like other late Kubricks it carries the much-celebrated aura of indulgence, in this case reinforced by its extra-long running time, immaculate art direction, new lenses specially designed for authentic candlelight, and so on. Unlike the others, though, it has never been rescued by achieving wide cult status: nor is it available on PAL video or laserdisc in this country. It is regarded even by many diehard Kubrick fans as his one Major Artistic Folly. Questions most often asked include: why all those slow zooms? Why the continual cross cutting from reaction shot to reaction shot when nothing is going on? And what the hell is Ryan O'Neal doing in there?

However, on Channel 4 recently, Martin Scorsese used *Barry Lyndon* to illustrate Kubrick's career in his *A Personal Journey through American Movies*. The film is a masterpiece, argued Scorsese, in which Kubrick's technique is to slow down the action to the point where it becomes a sort of trance: partly to suggest the pace of life in the period, and partly to suggest a kind of ballet or ritual of movement in which characters, film and audience are all trapped. The camera's poise is deceptive and belies deeper

Director Benjamin Ross, whose debut feature is 'The Young Poisoner's Handbook', celebrates the drama of failure in Stanley Kubrick's 'Barry Lyndon'

processes, all the more powerful for being so artfully constrained. "One of the most emotional films I've seen," confessed Scorsese.

Barry Lyndon is the antithesis of what mainstream film-making has become. As is often noted, Kubrick's main concern in the story is the very opposite of keeping people in suspense. This goes against the formulaic logic of most film narratives but in Kubrick's hands it is a key to greater dramatic intensity. Redmond Barry's journey – up through the ranks of English society and back down again minus a leg and everything he has ever loved – has the simple predictability of a cautionary tale. It could be understood by a 12-year-old. Kubrick's narrative structures are so formal, simple and symmetrical that the very notion of dramatic suspense evaporates and one is left with something close to a cinema of pure feeling.

One of the key qualities of Kubrick's films is not their innocence but their striving for innocence: an important distinction, covering the distance between the cynical, disingenuous "innocence" of *Forrest Gump* and the properly moral irony of *Full Metal Jacket*. In an interview somewhere Kubrick argued that film has not progressed at a formal level since the first pioneers discovered its basic syntax of composition, montage and *mise en scène*. Kubrick himself might be one of the exceptions, and seems to me to have been chipping away at film on a formal level for years. From 2001 onwards his narratives have been the most experimental within the mainstream. They have somehow contrived to become both more visceral and more abstract – inviting and repelling interpretation in equal measure. They are enigmas which contain rather than yield up their complexity, demanding to be felt and experienced before they are analysed.

Kubrick likes to invert the half-baked sentimentalities of conventional film narratives so that something more substantial

can emerge. And this 'something' turns out to be moments, images, or whole narratives of stunning emotional primacy, so self-contained as to be perfectly mysterious and dreamlike. Practically the whole of *The Shining* is like this, a spin on the horror movie in which every scene and detail takes us into realms of symbol and nightmare: the maze, the hotel, the names Jack and Wendy, the red-painted lavatory in which Jack starts to project his repressed fantasies of wife-beating, racism and child-murder. Kubrick's reputation is for indulgence: I disagree. His films are bewilderingly exact, but only so that they can convey the authority of dreams. In fact it's amazing just how far he is able to take us into unfamiliar or uncomfortable terrain and still keep hold of our understanding.

Barry Lyndon is an equivalent achievement but it is also crucially different from the other late Kubricks: a different dreamscape and closer in tone to the elegy of 2001 than the apocalyptic nightmare of the other films. But it's different again from that film's *ballet mécanique*. Its dominant tone is one of yearning – of promise unfulfilled. The image which lingered in my mind for years was of a face slowly and forlornly turning towards its object of desire: Redmond looking up at his beloved Nora at the beginning of the film when he 'can't find' the handkerchief. Or the face of the young German girl as she asks Redmond: "Are you sometimes lonely?" Or Redmond's first tentative kiss with Lady Lyndon (which Scorsese chose in his documentary). Or Redmond's face as he weeps over his dying son. Or Marisa Berenson in practically any of her artfully staged moments. In keeping with Kubrick's very plastic, self-contained art, the pose is the emotion, captured again and again in an eternal round of unfulfilled desire and loss.

'The Young Poisoner's Handbook' is on current release



The pose is the emotion: Stanley Kubrick's powerful and poised 'Barry Lyndon'

BY STILL POSTERS AND DESIGNS



PANTHER
Mario Van Peebles, 1995



CARMEN
Francesco Rossi, 1984



MY BEAUTIFUL LAUNDRETTE
Stephen Frears, 1985



I HAVE A DATE WITH SPRING
Ko Chi Sum, 1995



MAD LOVE
Antonia Bird, 1995



WHEN NIGHT IS FALLING
Patricia Rozema, 1995



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WOMEN IN FILM
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ANGELS AND INSECTS
Philip Haas, 1995

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REVIEWS

Reviews, synopses and full credits for all the month's new films plus a selected re-release

Canadian Bacon

USA 1995

Director: Michael Moore

Certificate

PG
Distributor
 PolyGram
Production Company
 PolyGram Filmed Entertainment
Propaganda Films
 present a
 Maverick Picture
 Company Production
Executive Producers
 Freddy De Mann
 Sigurjon Sighvatsson
Producers
 Michael Moore
 David Brown
 Ron Rotholz
 Steve Golin
Executive in Charge of Production
 Propaganda Films:
 Tim Clawson
Co-producer
 Kathleen Glynn
Line Producer
 Stuart M. Besser
Associate Producer
 Terry Miller
Production Co-ordinator
 Tina Grewal
Production Manager
 Chris Danton
Location Managers
 Geoffrey Smither
 Onya Furey
Post-production Supervisors
 Alexandra White
 David Gaines
 Propaganda Films:
 Scott Carleton
Assistant Directors
 Terry Miller
 Walter Gasparovic
 Penny Charter
 Grant Lucibello
Script Supervisor
 Mimi Wolch
Casting
 Lynn Kressell
 Toronto:
 Deirdre Bowen
Screenplay
 Michael Moore
Director of Photography
 Haskell Wexler
Camera Operator
 Harald Ortenburger
Editors
 Wendy Stanzler
 Michael Berenbaum
Production Designer
 Carol Spier
Art Director
 Tamara Deverell
Set Decorator
 Carol Lavoie
Scenic Artist
 John Bannister
Storyboard Artist
 Kelly Brine
Special Effects Co-ordinators
 Trans Image Special
Effects:
 Bob Hall
 Arthur Langevin
Costume Design
 Kathleen Glynn
 Canada:
 Michele Harney
Make-up Artist
 Katherine Southern
Hairstylist
 Janice Miller
Title Design
 Kathleen Glynn
Opticals
 Reel Effects
 Howard Anderson
Company
Music
 Elmer Bernstein
 Peter Bernstein
Music Conductor
 Elmer Bernstein

Orchestrations

Emille Bernstein
Music Editors
 Nicholas Meyers
 Lori Slovka
Songs/Music Extracts
 "God Bless America
 Again" by Bobby Bare,
 Boyce Hawkins,
 performed by Tex
 Ritter; "Toy Never
 Played With" by Kevin
 Kinney, Tim Neilson,
 performed by Driving
 'n' Cryin'; "Blowin' in
 the Wind" by Bob
 Dylan; "Cryin' Shame"
 by David Wells, Rod
 Auger, C. J. Roberts,
 performed by C. J.
 Leftus; "Friend From
 Quebec" by Don Ralph,
 performed by Life In A
 Blender; "Born in the
 U.S.A." by Bruce
 Springsteen; "Only
 in America" by Jerry
 Leiber, Mike Stoller,
 Cynthia Weil, Barry
 Mann, performed by
 REM; "High Hopes"
 by Sammy Cahn, James
 Van Heusen; "Ashes... I
 Fall Down" by Eric
 Phillips; "Ballad of the
 Green Beret" by Barry
 Sadler, Robin Moore,
 performed by Barry
 Sadler; "Honey"
 by Bobby Russell,
 performed by Bobby
 Goldsboro; "Snowbird"
 by Gene MacLellan,
 performed by Anne
 Murray; "Oklahoma"
 by Richard Rogers,
 Oscar Hammerstein II
Supervising Sound Editor
 Paul B. Clay
Dialogue Editors
 Jerry Jacobson
 Laureen Stephens
 Ken Miller
 Rich Stevens
ADR Editor
 Pat Somerset
Sound Mixer
 Douglas Ganton
ADR/Foley Mixer
 Karen Roulo
ADR Mixer
 Bo Biggart
Sound Recordists
 Keith Cultherbert
 Ted Clark
 Harry Higgins
Sound Re-recordist
 Dominick Tavella
Sound Effects Editors
 Susan Kurtz
 Patrick O'Sullivan
 Victor Iorillo
 Cindy Rabideau
 Dan Tripoli
Loop Group
 Studio City Players
Consultants
 Rod Birsleson
 Robert Wilhelm
 Alan Hirvela
 Ben Hamper
 Creative:
 Chris Kelly
Stunt Co-ordinator
 Branko Racki
Animal Wrangler
 Brian Renfro

Cast

Alan Alda
 President of the
 United States
 John Candy
 Bud B. Boomer
 Rhea Perlman
 Deputy Honey
 Kevin Pollak
 Stuart Smiley

Rip Torn
 General Dick Panzer
 Kevin J. O'Connor
 Roy Boy
 Bill Nunn
 Kabral
 G. D. Spradlin
 R. J. Hacker
 Steven Wright
 Niagara Mountie
 James Belushi
 Charles Jackal
 Brad Sullivan
 Gus
 Stanley Anderson
 Edwin S. Simon
 Richard Council
 Russian President
 Michael Copeman
 Panzer's Aide
 Bruce Hunter
 President's Aide
 Beth Amos
 Ruthie
 Jack Mather
 Pops
 Kenner Ames
 Mountie Sergeant
 Roger Dunn
 Mountie Major
 Natalie Rose
 Toronto Kid
 Michael Woods
 Matt Cooke
 State Troopers
 Barbara Schroeder
 Newswoman
 Tara Myer
 Fab Filippo
 Candy Strippers

Carlton Watson
 Secretary of Commerce
 Stan Coles
 Secretary of State
 Adrian Hough
 Russian Aide
 Bryan Armstrong
 Auctioneer
 Kelsey Binder Moore
 Leah Binder Moore
 Ice Cream Girls
 Wally Bolland
 Special Ops Soldier
 Marcos Parilo
 Omega Force Leader
 Jim Czarnecki
 Snake
 Tony Proffer
 Dell
 Ben Hamper
 Michael Moore
 Rednecks
 Linda Genovesi
 Polite Canadian
 Woman
 Sheila Gray
 Voice of Hacker
 Hellstorm
 Dana Brooks
 Paulette Kalin
 Dan Ackroyd
 Highway Patrolman

8,056 feet
 90 minutes

Dolby stereo
 Black and white
 In colour

With the cold war now over, the US President's popularity is flagging so his National Security Advisor Stu Smiley, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and General Dick Panzer suggest a little skirmish abroad to deflect attention. They decide to pick on Canada and put into motion a subtle anti-Canadian campaign.

Meanwhile in Niagara, on the US/Canadian border, Bud Boomer, the Sheriff of Niagara Falls, and his deputies, Honey and Roy Boy, are having a hard time. Their former place of employment, ammunition manufacturer Hacker Dynamics, has closed down and recession grips the town. When R.J. Hacker hears of the anti-Canada campaign, he meets up with Smiley to suggest that they need arms as well as words. A CIA man masquerading as a Canadian attempts to blow up the ammunition plant, but is caught by Boomer and his company. Later Boomer, Honey and Boy decide to mount a raid on Canada, planning to dump a pile of litter there. Almost apprehended by a Mountie, they flee back to the US, but leave Honey behind. It is presumed that she has been taken hostage by the Mounties, though in fact she has escaped.

Boomer and Boy return to Canada where they infiltrate a power plant and close it down. The Canadian Prime Minister contacts the US President to protest the action. The President decides that Boomer is a liability and sends the Omega Force to track him down. Meanwhile, Boomer goes to Toronto in pursuit of Honey, while Hacker, backed by Smiley, programmes a missile launch aimed at Canada. Arriving in Toronto, Honey makes her way to the tower followed by Boomer and the Omega Force. Hacker has installed an explosives device in the tower, but Honey manages to prevent it

from going off. With the crisis over, she and Boomer return to the US.

Michael Moore made his name with his politically acerbic and punchy documentary *Roger and Me*. A rare example of a successful non-fictional theatrical release it chronicled the demise of his home town of Flint, Michigan after General Motors closed down their plant there. Now in his first fictional feature film, he turns his attention to America's imperialist appetite. According to the press notes, he conceived the idea for *Canadian Bacon* after the United States' Operation Desert Storm invasion of Iraq. The concept for this post-Cold-War satire has a levity to it: America has to kick someone's ass so why not pick on Canada.

It is the anti-Canada jokes that give the film its zing - as if the whole point is to play on the famous Canadian inferiority complex. After all, as one character puts it, what have the Canadians given us but metric systems and Neil Young? "They walk among us undetected - look at William Shatner, Michael J. Fox, Michael Myers," says another propagandist (the ultimate joke being that star John Candy was a Canadian). Meanwhile the drinking of Molson beer and the playing of ice-hockey are banned as un-American activities. It starts out as a delightfully ludicrous idea, although some of the references might not translate well outside North America. Dan Ackroyd (another Canadian) plays a highway patrolman who flags Boomer down only to point out that the graffiti on his van should be in both French as well as English. One has to know that Canada is famous for its cleanliness to get some of the jokes - Toronto is described as being like the notoriously dull New York State capital Albany, "only cleaner".

Soon, however, the comedy begins to wear pretty thin. The presence, in cameo roles, of Ackroyd, along with Jim Belushi and Steve Wright reminds one that *Canadian Bacon* is really no more than an over-extended sketch for *Saturday Night Live* - or even its Canadian counter-part SCTV, of which Candy was a founding member. Once the audience gets the point about the US Government's - and arms manufacturers' - need for an enemy, there is little else to focus on. Moore has proved he's able to pace his documentary work, whether for *Roger and Me* or his alternative news show *Michael Moore's TV Nation*, but there is nothing lean about *Canadian Bacon*.

Lizzie Francke



Maple leaf ragging: Candy, Perlman

Clockers

USA 1995

Director: Spike Lee

Certificate
tbc

Distributor
UIP

Production Company
40 Acres And A Mule
Production

Executive Producers
Rosalie Swedlin
Monty Ross

Producers
Martin Scorsese
Spike Lee
Jon Kilic

Co-producer
Richard Price

Production Supervisor
Caryn E. Campbell

Production Co-ordinators
Angela Quiles
2nd Unit Albuquerque:
John Meade

Production Manager
Jon Kilic

Location Managers
Adam G. Williams
2nd Unit Albuquerque:
Cindi Hobgood

Location Co-ordinator
Susan E. Brown

Assistant Directors
Michael Ellis
John Lyons
Gingi Rochelle

Casting
Robi Reed Humes

Associate:
Aisha Coley

Screenplay
Richard Price
Spike Lee

Based on the book by
Richard Price

Script Supervisor
Shari L. Carpenter

Director of Photography
Malik Hassan Sayeed

Camera Operators
Gearey McLeod
George Pattison

Steadicam Operators
Rick Raphael
John A. Corso

Special Visual Effects
Gangsta Video Game

Producer:
Balsmeyer and Everett
Supervising Designer:
Randall Balsmeyer

Animation:
Daniel Leung

Design and Illustration:
Lisa Lee Lucas

Additional Illustration:
Jennifer Bernstein

Modelling:
Michael Arias

Editor
Sam Pollard

Associate Editor
Leander T. Sales

Production Designer
Andrew McAlpine

Supervising Art Director
Tom Warren

Art Director
Ina Mayhew

Set Decorator
Debra Schutt

Scenic Artists
Rand Angelicola
Mark Bachman
Gary Finkel
Robert Franca
Philip Kennedy
Jennifer Krause
Joel Ossenforn
Alyson Poselia
Chinyere Ryan
Margaret Ryan
Leslie Saulter

Special Effects
Supervisor/Co-ordinator
Steve Kirshoff

Costume Design
Ruth Carter

Wardrobe Supervisors
Jane E. Myers
Askie Won-Ling Jacob

Make-up
Diane Hammond

Hairstylist
Larry M. Cherry

Title Design
Balsmeyer and Everett

Music
Terence Blanchard
Music Supervisor
Alex Steyermark

Songs/Music Extracts
"People in Search of a
Life" by Raymond
Jones, performed
by Marc Dorsey;
"Survival of the
Fittest/Return of the
Crooklyn Dodgers"
by Chubb Roc, O.C.,
Jeru The Damaja, D.J.
Premier, performed
by Crooklyn Dodgers
'95; "Children of the
Ghetto" by Christopher
Amoo, Edward Amoo,
performed by Philip
Bailey; "Illa Killa"
by Rasheed Brown,
performed by Strictly
Difficult; "Reality
Check" by Branford
Marsalis, Ricky Dacosta,
performed by Buckshot
Lefonque; "Crazy",
"Bird of Freedom",
"Newborn Friend"
by and performed
by Seal; "Silent Hero"
by Des'ree, Prince
Sampson, performed
by Des'ree; "Bad Boy No
go a Jail" by Monk
Higgins, Garth
Williams, performed
by Mega Banton;
"Changes" by Gordon
Chambers, Ike Lee III,
performed by Marc
Dorsey; "Sex Soldier"
by George Kahn,
Mekael Henningham,
performed by Rebelz
of Authority; "Blast of
the Iron" by and
performed by Rebelz
of Authority;
"Posidrive" by John
Fiddy, performed
by John Fiddy, Sammy
Burdson; "Love Me
Still" by and performed
by Chaka Khan, Bruce
Hornsby; "Outta Here"
by Lawrence Parker,
DJ Premier, performed
by KRS-One

Sound Design
Skip Lievsay

Dialogue Editors
Phil Stockton, Kevin Lee

Supervising Foley Editor
Bruce Poss

ADR Editor
Marissa Littlefield

Foley Editor
Frank Kern
Steve Visscher

Sound Recordist
Tod Maitland

ADR Mixer
David Boulton

Effects Recordist
Ben Cheah

Sound Re-recording Mixer
Tom Fleischman

Sound Effects Editor
Eugene Gearty

Foley Artists
Marko Constanzo

Technical Consultant
Lt. Donald Stephenson

Stunt Co-ordinator
Jeff Ward

Cast
Harvey Keitel
Rocco Klein
John Turturro
Larry Mazilli
Delroy Lindo
Rodney
Mekhi Phifer
Strike
Isaiah Washington
Victor
Keith David
Andre the Giant
Pee Wee Love
Tyrone
Regina Taylor
Iris Jeeter
Tom Byrd
Errol Barnes
Sticky Fingaz
Scientific
Fredro
Go
E.O. Nolasco
Horace
Lawrence B. Adisa
Stan
Kassan Johnson
Skills
Frances Foster
Gloria
Michael Imperioli
Jo-Jo
Lisa Arrindell Anderson
Sharon
Paul Calderon
Jesus at Hambones
Brendan Kelly
Big Chief
Mike Starr
Thumper
Graham Brown
Mr. Herman Brown
Steve White
Darryl Adams
Spike Lee
Chuck
Shawn McLean
Solo
Arthur Nascarella
Bartucci
Bill Walker
Harry Lennix
Bray Poor
Craig McQuity
Christopher Wynkoop
Paul Schulze
Lt. Donald Stephenson
Detectives
John Fletcher
Al the Medic
J.C. Mackenzie
Frank the Medic
David Evanson
Smart Mike
Norman Matlock
Reverend Paul
Isaac Fowler
Charles
Leonard Thomas
Onion the Bar Patron
Maurice Sneed
Davis the Bartender
Calvin Hart
Guard

Ginny Yang
Kiki
Michael Badalucco
Ricky Aiello
Cops
Scott Anthony Robinson
Earl
Richard Ziman
Moe
David Batiste
T
Mar'ques Sample
Ivan
Mar'rice Sample
Mark
Ron Brice
Dead Man Begging
Ken Garito
Louie
Anthony Nocerino
Brain Konowal
Michael McGruther
Carlo Vogel
Teens
Harvey Williams
'Pick Me Up' Kid
Michael Cullen
Tim Kelleher
Skip Sudduth
Narcs
Larry Muliane
Larry the Narc
Patrick Ferraro
L.B. Williams
Jeff Ward
Bike Cops
Ronda Fowler
Bomb Girl
Hal Sherman
Forensics Officer
Marc Webster
EMS Technician
James Saxenmeyer
Paul Dubois
Jordan Brown
EMS Attendants
Michael Marchetta
Joanna Gardner
Corrections Officers
Mark Howard
Michael Shepherd
Gerald King
Ronta Davis
Baby Recruits
Lord Kayson
Orran Farmer
T's Crewmembers
Wayne Muhammed
Fruit of Islam Vendor
Martin Jaffe
Street Vendor
Freddie Velez
Pedro the Security
Guard

realises that his brother is drunk and splits. A short while later, someone pumps four bullets into Darryl.

The next day, Victor turns himself in, claiming he killed Darryl in self-defence. Veteran homicide detective Rocco Klein thinks Victor is protecting Strike. Rocco begins pursuing Strike with a vengeance. For Strike, Rocco is one too many among the people - narcotics cops, his mother, local black cop Andre and bright, idolising 12-year-old Tyrone - who hassle him on a daily basis. Rocco arrests Rodney, suggesting that it's Strike who ratted on him. Strike realises he'd better get out of town. While packing his gear, he realises his gun is missing. He gives Victor's wife the money for Victor's bail but Strike's mother refuses to make peace with him.

Errol, a stone killer in the last stages of Aids dementia and Rudy's right hand man, comes gunning for Strike. Tyrone sees him before Strike does, pulls out the gun he's 'borrowed' from Strike and shoots Errol dead. At the police station, Andre begs Rocco to help Tyrone get off with a minimum sentence. He then beats up Strike for getting Tyrone involved. Strike barely makes it back to his car when he spots Rodney coming after him. He takes refuge in the police station where Rocco presses him to confess to murdering Darryl. Suddenly, Strike's mother appears and tells Rocco that Victor came home that night acting crazy and that his story is true. Strike is set free but, finding his car has been trashed by Rodney, he leaves on a train heading west.

Adapted from the Richard Price novel of the same name, Spike Lee's *Clockers* is about black-on-black violence. Lee shifts the focus from Price's central character Rocco Klein (a middle-aged white cop having an identity crisis) to Strike, the African-American teenage crack dealer who makes what he believes is a rational choice - to earn his living selling a product people want even though it kills them - and finds himself torn apart by the violence of the drug world and the unexpected revolt of his own conscience. The film shows that there are no positive choices for black men born into the underclass. Attempting to live an upstanding life, Strike's brother Victor is also driven crazy.

Clockers opens with a title sequence that's bravura even for Lee. The camera travels over a succession of grisly police photos of murder scenes - black male bodies torn apart by bullets. Behind a yellow police tape, crowds of black faces watch a nightly spectacle of bloodletting that's both too immediate and too removed to be comprehensible. At once didactic and operatic, this opening positions us for the film that follows. What's most startling about *Clockers* is its intimacy. Lee puts us inside the skin of a kid who seems morally reprehensible at the outset, making the agony of his experience inescapable.

Lee's choice of camera placement

and movement has never been more brilliant. The camera's erratic rhythms and circular patterns articulate the extreme confinement of Strike's world and his panicky sense of being held in a vice. Similarly, the narrative, though dense with incident, seems to turn in on itself, covering the same ground over and over again. Everything in Strike's world - the repetitive riffs of rap music, the claustrophobic space of video games, his fetishised electric trains that circle a single track even as they testify to the existence of unknown and distant places - reinforces the feeling of confinement.

Given everything that comes before it, the final sequence - Strike's face pressed against the train window as it crosses a desert landscape that must seem to him as vast and charged with possibility as outer space - is, for a moment, wildly liberating. But Lee undercuts this feeling with a cutaway to one of Strike's crew, lying dead in a pool of blood on the concrete platform where we first saw Strike. Already the crowd is gathering around the corpse. Strike has escaped but he carries his past with him. Given what we know of American society today, why would we think there's a place for him that's different from where he's been?

In terms of form, and content easily Lee's riskiest and most accomplished film to date, *Clockers* is not without its flaws. In focusing so much on Strike, Lee makes the other characters one-dimensional. Newcomer Mekhi Phifer makes an amazing Strike, so much like an ordinary kid it's hard to remember that he's acting. Yet such extraordinary actors as Isaiah Washington, Delroy Lindo, Harvey Keitel and John Turturro are strait-jacketed by the script and direction.

Lee encourages cinematographer Malik Sayeed to extend the experiments with the cutting together of various types of film stock begun by Arthur Jaffe in Lee's *Crooklyn*. Sometimes this method yields expressive results, as in the flashback sequences which have the texture of over-saturated 16mm Kodachrome. Just as often, the effect is purely decorative, as in the burnt-up look of the police interrogation scenes which seem borrowed from Oliver Stone's *J.F.K.*

The director's most serious mistake, however, is to toy with a whodunnit structure until the climactic and hopelessly stacy interrogation of Strike by Rocco reveals the truth about Darryl's death. Viewers who have read the novel will know that Strike is not a murderer (Price puts that issue to rest early on in his narrative) but newcomers will be led down paths that are irrelevant, if not downright destructive, to the sense of subjectivity that Lee wants to convey.

With the mystery out of the way, the film seems infinitely more powerful on the second viewing, and even more so on the third. Desolate, hallucinatory and fearlessly heartfelt it is the 'hood movie to end all 'hood movies. In its violence, there is neither glamour, nor pleasure, nor release.

Amy Taubin

Clueless

USA 1995

Director: Amy Heckerling

Certificate
12
Distributor
UIP
Production Company
Paramount Pictures
Producers
Scott Rudin
Robert Lawrence
Co-producers
Barry Berg
Adam Schroeder
Associate Producer
Twink Caplan
Production Co-ordinator
Yoli Poropat
Unit Production Manager
Barry Berg
Location Manager
Jeffrey T. Spellman
Assistant Directors
Richard Graves
Daniel Silverberg
Diana Williams
Casting
Marcia S. Ross
Screenplay
Amy Heckerling
Script Supervisor
Esther Vivante
Director of Photography
Bill Pope
Camera Operator
Lawrence Karman
Steadicam Operator
Jim Muro
Editor
Debra Chiate
Production Designer
Steven Jordan
Art Director
William Hiney
Set Decorator
Amy Wells
Set Dressers
James LaBarge
Wendy Murray
Ken Abraham
Mark Kusy
Production Illustrator
Petko Kadiev
Costume Design
Mona May
Costume Supervisor
Chic Gennarelli
Make-up Supervisor
Alan "Doc" Friedman
Hairstylist
Nina Paskowitz
Titles
Robert Dawson
Opticals
Pacific Title
Music
David Kitay
Music Conductor /
Orchestrations
Reginald Powell
Music Supervisor
Karyn Rachtmann
Music Editor
Danny Garde
Music Co-ordinator
Billy Gottlieb
Songs/Music Extracts
"Kids in America"
by Ricky Wilde, Marty Wilde, performed by The Muffs; "Fashion"
by and performed by David Bowie; "Just A Girl"
by Gwen Stefani, Tom Dumont,
performed by No Doubt; "Shoop"
by Cheryl James, Sandra Denton, Mark Sparks,
Otwane Roberts, performed by Salt-N-Pepa
contains sample from "I'm Blue" by Ike Turner,
performed by Sweet Inspirations;
"Fake Plastic Trees (Acoustic Version)"
by Thomas Yorke, Edward O'Brien,
performed by

Radiohead; "Shake Some Action"
by Cyril Jordan, Christopher Wilson,
performed by Cracker; "Change"
by Ian Broudie, performed by Lightning Seeds;
"Girls Just Want To Have Fun"
by Robert Hazard; "Supermodel"
by David Baerwald, David Kitay,
Brian Macleod, Kristen Vigard,
performed by Jill Sobule; "Buns of Steel 3"
by Fit Video; "Mentos Jingle Fresh Goes Better"
by John Groves; "Alright"
by and performed by Supergrass; "This Time"
by Novacain & World, performed by Pfunké Assfalt;
"Rollin' With My Homies"
by A. Ivey Jnr, Ralph Sall,
performed by Coolio; "Give It All You Got"
by Domino, Ralph Sall,
performed by Domino; "Away"
by Dolores O'Riordan,
performed by The Cranberries;
"Closer To Heaven"
by Wenty Morris, performed by The Chocolate Hippies;
"The Ghost In You"
by Richard Butler, Tim Butler,
performed by Counting Crows;
"My Forgotten Favorite"
by and performed by Velocity Girl;
"All The Young Dudes"
by David Bowie, performed by World Party;
"Summer of '42"
by Michel Legrand; "Ain't Nuttin' Wrong"
by Deirdra 'Spin' Roper, Herby Azor,
performed by Spin; "Gigi"
by Alan Jay Lerner, Frederick Loewe;
"Miss Brown To You"
by Ralph Rainger, Leo Robin,
Richard Whiting, performed by Billie Holiday;
"Someday I Suppose"
by Dennis Brockenborough,
Tim Burton, Joe Gittleman,
Kevin Lenear, Joseph Sirois,
Nate Albert, Dicky Barrett,
"Where'd You Go?"
by Nate Albert, Dicky Barrett,
performed by The Mighty Mighty Bosstones;
"Here (Squirrel Mix)"
by Jill Cunliff, Gabrielle Glaser,
performed by Luscious Jackson;
"I Believe I'm You"
by David Baerwald, Kevin Gilbert,
Sinatra Wilson, performed by Gail Orange;
"Oysters & Snails (From Spartacus)"
by Alex North; "All By Myself"
by Eric Carmen, Sergei Rachmaninoff,
performed by Jewel; "Mullet Head"
by and performed by Beastie Boys;
"Tenderness"
by Roger Charlery, David Wakeling,
Michael Billingham, performed by General Public; "Need You Around"
by Josh Caterer, performed by Smoking Popes; "Also Sprach Zarathustra"
by Richard Strauss

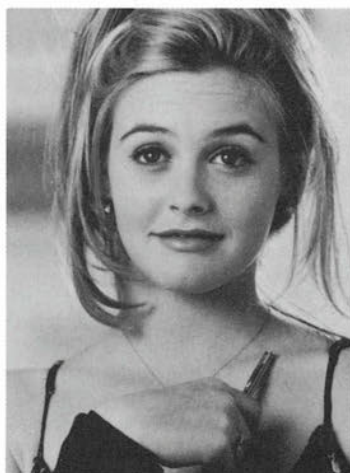
Choreography
Mary Ann Kellogg
Supervising Sound Editor
Uncle J. Kamen
Dialogue Editors
Gary Lewis
Sonya Henry
Dennis Gray
Andy Summers
Ralph Osbourne
Supervising Foley Editor
Trevor Jolly
ADR Editors
Shelley Rae Hinton
Eileen Horta
Virginia Cook-McGowan
Michele Perrone
Foley Editors
Peter Drake Austin
Andrew G. Patterson
Solange S. Schwalbe
Richard Taylor
Sound Mixer
David Ronne
ADR Mixers
Charleen Richards
Dean Drabin
Paul Zydel
Foley Mixer
David Jobe
Music Scoring Mixer
John Richards
Sound Re-recording Mixers
Paul Massey
Chris David
Don Digirolamo
Sound Effects Editors
Bruce Tannis
Peter Bergren
Andrew Ellerd
Foley Artists
Alyson Dee Moore
Patricia Nedd
Stunt Co-ordinator
Patrick Romano

Cast
Alicia Silverstone
Cher
Stacey Dash
Dionne
Brittany Murphy
Tai
Paul Rudd
Josh

Donald Faison
Murray
Elisa Donovan
Amber
Breckin Meyer
Travis
Jeremy Sisto
Elton
Dan Hedaya
Mel Hamilton
Aida Linares
Lucy
Wallace Shawn
Mr Wendell Hall
Twink Caplan
Miss Toby Geist
Justin Walker
Christian
Sabastian Rashidi
Paroudasm
Herb Hall
Principal
Julie Brown
Ms Stoege
Susan Mohun
Heather
Nicole Bilderback
Summer
Ron Orbach
DMV Tester
Sean Holland
Lawrence
Roger Kahler
College Guy
Jace Alexander
Robber
Josh Lazoff
Logan
Carl Gottlieb
Priest
Joseph D. Reitman
Student
Anthony Beninati
Bartender
Michi Duran
Greg Russell
Jermaine Montell
Daniella Eckert
Dancers

8,766 feet
97 minutes

Dolby stereo
In colour
Deluxe



Shop spoiled: Alicia Silverstone

about bettering herself by helping her father and volunteering for charity work. When she makes a bad mistake in her father's work, she thinks her incompetence has lost her Josh but he declares his love for her instead. At the wedding of the two teachers, she catches the bride's bouquet.

● "Clueless", meaning uncool, lost, or out of touch with what is happening, is part of the very particular lingo of Beverly Hills teenagers. The exclusivity of its meaning highlights how Beverly Hills makes an apt setting for a contemporary version of Jane Austen's *Emma*, and how a rich, superficial teenager makes a remarkably apposite heroine. Both early nineteenth-century Surrey and upper-class Los Angeles are small societies with pretensions to greatness, teeming with strict mores and ludicrous social niceties. The film contains a plethora of humorous details which echo the lady novelist's refined but stringent satire, such as Cher's nonchalant comment that her mother died during a routine liposuction procedure.

The handsome, clever, and rich heroine of Jane Austen's novel is transformed into a pretty, knowing, rich 15-year-old, who makes up for what she lacks in academic intelligence with impressive powers of persuasion and her unerring sense of her own rightness. Cher is completely tuned into her specific culture. It is one with its own language, fashions, cars and television programmes, one obsessed with shopping. If Cher has a bad day, she shops. If she needs to think up a plot, she shops. Even during her most philosophical and miserable monologue about her life, she breaks off to wonder about a dress she spots in a shop window. Cher's world is unashamedly narrow. Asked to debate on whether or not to allow Haitian immigrants sanctuary in the United States, she talks about her father's birthday party. She has no interest in current affairs and thinks Bosnia is in the Middle East. However, although she only knows *Hamlet* through the Mel Gibson film, she can outquote Josh's pseudo-intellectual girlfriend.

Her strong sense of morality is purely pragmatic. She disapproves of dope smoking except at parties because it

makes you dress badly and hang around with losers. Though she may be "hymenally challenged", or a virgin, it is only because she is saving herself for the right man. Yet while she is dismissive of most people in her school she is no snob, and is horrified by Elton's assertion that his father's standing makes him too good for Tai.

This version of 90s Californian materialism has a tang of a conservatism that is both intriguing and repellent. Intriguing because quaintly credible as it is, it is far from the teenage portraits usually presented to us on screen, and repellent because this lifestyle celebrates emptiness. This apes perfectly the portrait of young women spending their time doing nothing in the original novel. Cher's friend Dionne quips accurately that make-overs give Cher "a sense of control in a world of chaos".

Perhaps in the spirit of feminism, Cher is treated with a little more tenderness than her predecessor, Emma, while the equivalent to Mr Knightley, Josh, is less wholly perfect than the novel's hero. She is shocked (not satisfied as Emma was after the novel's equivalent incident) when silly Tai, trying to impress her new friends, publicly rebuffs her former friend Travis, the dopey but sweet skateboarder. Meanwhile, Josh, the Nietzsche-reading existentialist "nerd", is clever enough to see through Cher but is also naive enough to get excited about the prospect of Markie Mark opening some environmental event.

Aside from the nod to feminism, the novel is updated in two other ways. Cher has a best friend, the equally well turned out, equally pretty and rich Dionne (also named after a popstar who now appears on infomercials, as Cher blithely puts it) who happens to be black. Black people here are not consigned to South Central LA; and Cher's status is not a white prerogative. Frank Churchill, the man on whom Emma decides to bestow her own lofty attentions in Austen's book, here becomes Christian, a James Dean/Luke Perry-type, who turns out to be gay.

As a satirical moral tale, showing how the society in which a self-satisfied young woman establishes herself can rebound on her and teach her a few lessons, *Clueless* unfolds deftly. It is always difficult to infuse real emotion into satire without making it grossly sentimental, and this opts instead for chirpily affectionate moments. No one can really be expected to believe that Cher is going to change her ways because she loves Josh. The point is that she has learnt that she is not quite who she thought she was.

This is essentially a one-joke movie, but it is an enjoyably witty one, packed with vignettes of middle-class teenage lifestyles without resorting too much to video-style musical interludes. It may not have the laidback feel of *Dazed and Confused* or the sharpness of *Heathers* but it has its own perkily scripted realism and enough unmoralistic affection to keep us clued in to the follies of its heroine.

Amanda Lipman

Cold Fever

Iceland/Germany/Switzerland/USA 1994

Director: Fridrik Thor Fridriksson

Certificate
PG

Distributor
Theatrical Experience

Production Company
Icicle Films

In association with
Icelandic Film Corporation/Film Fonds
Hamburg/Sunrise
A.G./Pandora
Film/Zentropa
Entertainments/
Alta Films

Executive Producers
Fridrik Thor
Fridriksson
Christa Saredi
Reinhard Brundig
Peter Aalbæk Jensen

Producer
Jim Stark

Co-producer
George Gund III

Line Producer
Ari Kristinsson

Tokyo Unit Producer
Toshimori Iwaki

Production Co-ordinators
Zurich:
Reinder Kooyman
Tokyo:
Mark Higashino

Production Managers
Inga Björk Sólens
Tokyo:
Makiko Tomoda

Location Managers
Iceland:
Bjarni Felix Bjarnason

Assistant Directors
Iceland:
Maria Sigurðardóttir
Tokyo:
Masahiko Nagasawa
Shinji Aoyama
Norio Kida

Continuity
Inga Lisa Middleton

LA Casting
Judy Courtney

Screenplay
Jim Stark
Fridrik Thor
Fridriksson

Director of Photography
Ari Kristinsson

2nd Unit Director of Photography
Halldór Gunnarsson

Editor
Steingrímur Karlsson

Set Design
Árni Páll Jóhannsson

Special Effects
Ari Sigurðsson

Costume Design
Maria Ólafsdóttir

Make-up
Helga Bjartmars
Tokyo:
Midori Onuma

Hairstylist
Helga Bjartmars
Tokyo:
Midori Onuma

Music/Arrangements/Producer
Hilmar Örn Hilmarsson

Songs/Music Extracts
"Blue Intro" by
P. Skúlason,
S. Þorgirsson,
performed by AJAX;
"Brúðkaupssálmur"
(traditional) arranged
and performed by Hinn
Íslenski Þúrsaflokkur;
"Cold Fever" by Hilmar
Örn Hilmarsson,
performed by Ásgeir
Jónsson, Hilmar Örn
Hilmarsson; "Ég Er
Frjálst" by Pétur
Bjarnason, performed
by Jón Kr. Ólafsson,
Facon; "Ég Kveiki á
Kertum..." by Guðrún

Bóðvarsdóttir, David
Stefánsson; "Falling"
by Hilmar Örn
Hilmarsson, D. Tibet,
performed by Hilmar
Örn Hilmarsson;
"iBetlehem er Barn Oss
Fætt" (traditional); "Jon
Er Kominn Heim" by
Robinson, Þunn
Steinsdóttir; performed
by Mjoll Hólm;
"Karma" by and
performed by Jóhan G.
Jóhannsson;
"Killerboogie" by and
performed by Þeyr;
"Krummi Svaf í
Klettagjá" (traditional)
performed by Björgvin
Ásgeirsson, Hálfán
Theodórsen; "Kúreki
Nordursins" by
Hallbjörn Hjartarson,
Rúnar Kristjánsson,
performed by Hallbjörn
Hjartarson; "Kvöldid er
Fagurt" (traditional),
performed by Björgvin
Ásgeirsson, Hálfán
Theodórsen; "Namida
No Kiss" by Kuwata
Keisuke, performed by
Masatoshi Nagase; "Nú
Er Frost Á Fróni"
(traditional);
"Nútíminn" by Egill
Ólafsson, Sigurður
Bjólá Garðarsson,
performed by Hinn
Íslenski Þúrsaflokkur;
"Ó Min Flaska Frida"
(traditional); "Snow
Princess" by Þ.
Skúlason, Svala
Björgvinsdóttir,
performed by
Underground Family;
"Symphony" by
Sigurjón Kjartansson,
performed by Olympia;
"Till Now" by David
Magnússon, Páll
Barnie, performed by
Bubbleflies; "Upp Til
Fjalla" by Hallbjörn
Hjartarson, Rúnar
Kristjánsson,
performed by Hallbjörn
Hjartarson; "Nú Er
Kallid Komid" by J. S.
Bach

Sound/Sound Editor
Kjartan Kjartansson

Horse Wrangler
Ólafur Einarsson

Cast
Masatoshi Nagase
Hirata
Lili Taylor
Jill
Fisher Stevens
Jack
Gisli Halldórsson
Siggi
Laura Hughes
Laura
Seijun Suzuki
Hirata's Grandfather
Hiromasa Shimada
Suzuki
Masayuki Sasaki
Higashino
Taizou Mizumura
Hirata's Father
Ichiko Takashi
Hirata's Mother
Taeiko Kato
Girl in TV Show
Toshimori Iwaki
TV Show Commentator
Ari Matthiasson
Bus Guide
Magnús Ólafsson
Taxi Driver
Rúrik Haraldsson
Grave Digger

Floasi Ólafsson
Hotel Owner
Briet Hóbinsdóttir
Woman at Farm
Katrín Ólafsdóttir
Psychic Woman
Hallbjörn Hjartarson
Cowboy of the North
Álfurinn Órnaldsdóttir
Screaming Girl
Jóhannes B. Guðmundsson
Frikki
Hrafnhildur Helgadóttir
Icelandic Passenger
Guðrún Sigurðsdóttir
Girl in Shop
Fridrik Steinn Fridriksson
Guðrún Sigurðsdóttir
Kári Steinn Karlsson
Órvar Jens Arnarsson
Elves
Björgvin Ásgeirsson
Jón Birgir Yalsson
Elisabeth Zitterbart
Kör Öldutunnskóla
Félag eldri borgara
Félag eldri borgara
Félagar úr kór
Bústaðakirkju
Guð'n y Kristjánsdóttir
Hálfán Theodórsen
Hjálmar Sverrisson
Ingþor Óli Harðarson
Kör Öldutunnskóla
Kristinn Hardarson
Leikfélag Hveragerðis
Leikfélag Keflavíkur
Leikfélag Selfoss
Lofur Ásgerisson
Lothar Kraftzik
Orri Björnsson
Additional Cast

7.885 feet
85 minutes

Dolby stereo
In colour
Subtitles

Hirata, a young Japanese businessman working for a Tokyo fish selling company, is asked by his grandfather to visit Iceland. His parents died there seven years before in a freak accident, and the grandfather wants him to administer last rites so their souls can rest in peace. Hirata is unwilling to comply. He already has a holiday booked in Hawaii, and thinks the whole business of rites is superstition. However, one night, while practising his golf putting on his apartment floor, he accidentally switches on an old video his parents sent him before they died. He sees this is an omen. After getting permission from his boss, he agrees to head to the frozen north. Iceland is in the grip of winter when Hirata arrives. After various misadventures in tour buses and taxis, he reaches Reykjavik. His destination is the other side of the country. He buys a rickety old car from a stranger and drives off down the snowy roads.

The car breaks down frequently. He picks up Laura, an eccentric photographer obsessed with funerals. After he has dropped her off, he gives a lift to Jack and Jill, argumentative American tourists lost in the wilderness. Jack turns out to be a petty crook, pulls a gun on him, and hijacks the car. Hirata is forced to go on on foot. He reaches an inn run by an Icelandic country and western fan. That night, there's a big cowboy party. Hirata, depressed to learn the place where his parents died is inaccessible by road till spring, drinks heavily. He's befriended by an old man, who believes it may be possible to get there on horseback.

The next morning, Hirata and the old man ride off in search of the sacred site. When they come within reach of it, the old man tells Hirata to go on ahead and to perform his ceremony. Hirata does so. At last his parents will be able to rest in peace.

The idea of the savvy, metropolitan stranger arriving in what he or she first thinks is a provincial backwater is a cliché of much film and television drama: it's the conceit behind several movies from *I Know Where I'm Going* to *Local Hero*, it propels countless westerns, and also underscores such cult series as *Northern Exposure*.

In *Cold Fever*, however, the backwater

in question is an entire country - Iceland. "I learned that sometimes a journey can take you to a place that's not on any map," the film's Japanese hero, Hirata, murmurs at the end of his trip across the frozen limits. But this is not just the usual exercise in self-discovery. In terms of world cinema, Iceland is uncharted territory. On one level, the movie is a plea by its makers for a little overdue attention.

The script, co-written by director Fridrik Thor Fridriksson and producer Jim Stark, lays on national stereotypes with a heavy hand. Tokyo is depicted as a seething, overcrowded city, full of golf-playing, gadget-wielding, karaoke-singing businessmen. Iceland is drawn in equally broad strokes as a beautiful white wilderness, peopled by hard-drinking, kind-hearted and knowledgeable eccentrics. Tour guides and taxi drivers assail Hirata with statistics - it's a country of 260,000 people; has more writers proportionally than anywhere else, and boasts the most beautiful women. "Two out of the last five Miss Worlds," the taxi driver declares with finality when Hirata looks a little quizzical at his claims.

Narratively, the film is almost as empty as the landscapes Hirata crosses. In the course of his trip, he is waylaid by a mad American photographer who likes photographing strangers' funerals, and he unwisely gives a lift to two obnoxious American tourists who end up stealing his car. Played in low-key by Masatoshi Nagase (the Japanese Elvis from Jim Jarmusch's *Mystery Train*) he's one of those impassive heroes, whose faces betray barely a glimmer of emotion, whatever situation they're confronted with. As he encounters Icelandic hippies, farm folk and country and western fans, and deals with various travel crises, the comedy is heightened by his failure to react with anything other than equanimity. Tramping through the snow with his suitcase in hand, he rekindles memories of Peter Sellers as Chance the gardener in *Being There*. There are occasional hints the weather will stop him reaching his destination, but, on the whole, nothing much happens. Nothing much is meant to happen. This is a spiritual journey. "Just stupid people only believe in things they can see and touch," Hirata is told by the old man who helps him reach his parents' resting place. Instead of drama, we're offered stunning scenery. There is something undeniably soothing about all that snow, ice and blue sky, and it's almost an intrusion when brash characters like Jack and Jill, the American tourists, blunder onto the scene with their conventional, worldly preoccupations.

Fridriksson strikes a leisurely, beguiling tempo. Despite occasionally creaky dialogue and the lingering suspicion that the director is a secret agent for the Icelandic Tourist Board, *Cold Fever* proves to be a therapeutic experience - a warm, quiet comedy which manages to steer clear of win-someness.

Geoffrey Macnab

Forget Paris

USA 1995

Director: Billy Crystal

Certificate
12

Distributor
Rank

Production Company
Castle Rock presents
A Face production

Executive Producer
Peter Schindler

Producer
Billy Crystal

Co-producer
Kelly Van Horn

Paris Production Supervisor
Jean-Pierre Avicé

Production Co-ordinators
Lisa Lynn Kearsley
Paris:
Joanny Carpentier

Production Manager
Kelly Van Horn

Location Managers
Lauren Ross
Steph Beneman
2nd Unit:
Rhonda Baer
Paris:
Sandrine Ageorges

Post-production Co-ordinator
Tricia Miles

2nd Unit Directors
Mickey Gilbert
Paris:
Peter Schindler

Assistant Directors
Jim Chory
John G. Scotti
Dave Hallinan
Rebecca Sajonz
Michael Winter
2nd unit:
John R. Woodward
Heidi Gutman
Paris:
Jean-Philippe Blime

Script Supervisors
Marion Tumen
2nd Unit:
Mary Ann Newfield

Casting
Pam Dixon Mickelson
ADR Voice:
Sounds Great
Toby Stone
Joan Ryan

Screenplay
Billy Crystal
Lowell Ganz
Babaloo Mandel

Director of Photography
Don Burgess

2nd Unit Director of Photography
Don McCuaig

Camera Operators
Robert La Bonge
Josh Bleibtreu
2nd Unit:
Walt Andrus
Walter B. Fraser

Steadicam Operator
Randy Nolen

Editor
Kent Beyda

Production Designer
Terence Marsh

Art Directors
William Cruse
Paris:
Jean-Michel Hugon

Set Design
Roy Barnes

Set Decorator
Michael Seirton

Set Dressers
Scott "Berserker" Collins
James Gregory Evans
Chris "Chappy" Fielding
Thierry "T. T." Labbe
Carew "Big Ton" Papritz
"Kurt V" Verbaarschott

Storyboard Artist
David J. Negrón Jr

Costume Design
Judy Ruskin

Costume Supervisor
Linda Matthews

Key Make-up Artist
Peter Montagna

Key Hairstylist
Bill Farley

Title Design
Pittard Sullivan
Fitzgerald

Titles/Opticals
Pacific Title

Music
Marc Shaiman

Music Conductor
Artie Kane

Orchestrations
Jeff Atmajian
Larry Blank
Harvey Cohen

Music Supervisors
Scott Stambler
Marc Shaiman

Music Consultant
Arlene Fishbach

Songs
"Love is Here to Stay"
by George Gershwin,
Ira Gershwin,
performed by (1) Billie
Holiday, (2) Gene Kelly;
"Let's Do It" by Cole
Porter; "For All We
Know" by J. Fred Coots,
Sam M. Lewis,
performed by Billie
Holiday; "Tea For Two"
by Vincent Youmans,
Irving Caesar; "It Don't
Mean a Thing (If It Ain't
Got That Swing)" by
Duke Ellington, Irving
Mills; "Nice Work if
You Can Get It" by
George Gershwin, Ira
Gershwin; "Blues in the
Night" by Johnny
Mercer, Harold Arlen;
"Let's Face the Music
and Dance" by Irving
Berlin; "School Days"
by Gus Edwards, Will
D. Cobb; "Just One of
Those Things" by Cole
Porter; "Lazy River"
by Sidney Arodin,
Hoagy Carmichael,
performed by Louis
Prima; "Cap'n Gentle"
by and performed by
John Pizzarelli, Martin
Pizzarelli, Ray Kennedy;
"My Melancholy Baby"
by Ernie Burnett,
George A. Norton;
"April in Paris" by
E. Y. Harburg, Vernon
Duke, performed by
Ella Fitzgerald, Louis
Armstrong; "Star
Spangled Banner"
by David Sanborn;
"When You Love
Someone" by Carole
Bayer Sager, Marc
Shaiman, Anita Baker,
performed by Anita
Baker, James Ingram

Choreography
Debbie Allen
Dancing Girls:
Lisa Estrada

Production Sound
Jeff Wexler
Don Coufal
Gary Holland

Supervising Sound Editors
Gregory King
Bobby Mackston

Dialogue Editors
Alison Fisher
Ulrika Akander
Jeffrey R. Payne

Supervising ADR Editor
Nicholas V. Korda

ADR Editors
Norto Sepulveda
Mary Andrews

Foley Editors
Michael Dressel
Jonathan Klein
Stewart Nelsen
ADR Mixer
Jeff Gomillion
Foley Mixers
Ezra Dweck
Greg Orloff
Music Mixer
Dennis Sands
Sound Re-recording Mixers
Richard Portman
Thomas Gerard
Neil Brody
Sound Effects Editors
Paul Berolzheimer
Karen Wilson
Odin Benitez
Foley Artists
John Cucci
Claudette Cucci
Basketball Co-ordinator
Malek Abdul-Mansour
Referee Technical Adviser
Jake O'Donnell
Stunt Co-ordinator
Mickey Gilbert

Cast
Billy Crystal
Mickey Gordon
Debra Winger
Ellen Andrews
Joe Mantegna
Andy
Cynthia Stevenson
Liz
Richard Masur
Craig
Julie Kavner
Lucy
William Hickey
Arthur
Robert Costanzo
Waiter
John Spencer
Jack
Tom Wright
Tommy
Cathy Moriarty
Lois
Johnny Williams
Lou
Marv Albert
Bill Walton
Charles Barkley
David Robinson
Dan Majerle
Kevin Johnson
Paul Westphal
Sean Elliott
Patrick Ewing
Tim Hardaway
Kareem Abdul-Jabbar
Bill Laimbeer
Reggie Miller
Chris Mullin
Charles Oakley
Kurt Rambis
John Starks
Isiah Thomas
Spud Webb
Marcus Johnson
Rush Limbaugh
David Sanborn
Safe-T-Man
Themselves
Bert Copello
Airline Employee
Ron Ross
Insolent Official
Andy Flaster
David St James
Gregory Paul Jackson
Andreas Tessa
Airline Officials
Chris Shaver
Laker Girl
Mary Oedy
Knicks City Dancer
Joie Shettler
Spurs Silver Dancer
Andrea Toste
Sonics Dancer
Lisa Gannon
Attractive Woman
Richard Assad
Suitcase Man
Lisa Rieffel
Receptionist
Emmy Smith
Woman in Porsche
Margaret Nagle
Marilyn
Janette Caldwell
Andy's Date

Tim Halligan
Doctor
Tim Alern
Fertility Doctor
Judyann Elder
Ivy
Deb Lacusta
Nurse
Tom Ohmer
Policeman
E. E. Bell
Marty Britton
Jo Farkas
Ken Johnson
Patrick Thomas O'Brien
Jay Rusumny
Angry Fans in Crowd
Robert Hunter Jr
Marty McSorley
Detroit Fans
Richard Haje
Dangerous Man
Clint Howard
Exterminator
Beverly Piper
Organist
Charlotte Etienne
3 Year Old Girl
Zachary Eglinton
5 Year Old Boy
Jennifer Mickelson
7 Year Old Girl
Allan Kolman
French Waiter
Hedwige de Mouroux
Distinguished Business Woman
Roberto Bonanni
Distinguished Frenchman
Jean Shum
Waitress
Andre Rossey Brown
Huge Bodyguard
Rick Gunderson
Eric Christian
Motorcycle Cops
Liz Sheridan
Woman in Car
Irving Wasserman
Man in Car
Genelle Lee Baumgardner
Veronique
Scotter Barry
Nathaniel Bellamy Jr
Robert M. Betts
Bernard Brown
Sam Crawford
Sterling Forbes
Greg Foster
Keith Gibbs
Anthony C. Hall
Kelvin L. Hildreth
Al Joseph
Brian Kilian
Gary Maloncon
Paul McCracken
Mike McGee
Nigel Miguel
Kevin Morris
Rich Porter
Cliff Reed
Charles Rochelin
Dawan Scott
Larry Spriggs
Reggie Theus
Charles Wahlheim
Marc Wilson
Dennis Wyatt
Basketball Team
Diane Alexander
Eleni Calevas
Dana Cuartero-Giordano
Sanny Jones
Blythe Matsui
Jodie McDonald
Shauna Morrison
Janet Payne
Gloria Rodriguez
Kris Storsberg
Dancers
Suren Arzuomanian
Jim Gasso
Barry Sousa
Harvey E. Tidwell
J. Greg Willard
Referees

9,103 feet
101 minutes

Dolby stereo
In colour

● In a restaurant, Andy, a fortyish sportswriter, tells Liz, his fiancée, the story of his friends Mickey and Ellen, how they met in Paris and fell in love. As various guests arrive, each one picks up the story...

When his father dies, Mickey Gordon, a top referee in the National Basketball Association, is obliged to fly with the body to France, so that the old man can be buried alongside his Second World War regiment. The airline loses the coffin, and a long trail of Gallic superciliousness leads to the office of Ellen Andrews, an expatriate American airline executive who locates the body. The funeral occurs in a small village, with Mickey the sole mourner... until Ellen shows up. The two spend an idyllic week in Paris. Still, Mickey has his career to think of, and decides he must forget Paris. On the basketball court, however, he can't get Ellen out of his mind, and he flies back to France to propose. She confesses that she is already married - though separated - and confused. Mickey returns home but one night on the road, Ellen unexpectedly appears, having given up her husband and her job for him.

Mickey and Ellen get married but Ellen soon finds LA life nerve-wracking, abhors her inferior job at Burbank airport and resents all the time Mickey spends away. She convinces him to take up a new career selling cars, and they move to a nice suburban house in the Valley. Ellen gets a promotion, and the two achieve an uneasy peace until her senile father moves in with them. Feeling stifled and dissatisfied, Mickey returns to refereeing. In desperation, they go to a series of marriage counselors. Finally, Ellen packs her father back to Witchitaw. Mickey and Ellen want a baby, but she has difficulty conceiving; it appears that nothing can be done. Ellen announces that she is leaving Mickey to accept a job back in Paris.

Now, some four months later, the assembled dinner guests are awaiting Mickey, who is late. Another patron interrupts the group to relate how, just moments ago, Mickey and Ellen were reunited on the basketball court to the jubilation of the crowd. The ecstatic couple arrives at the restaurant.

● Some years ago, Billy Crystal made a perfectly acceptable romantic comedian in *When Harry Met Sally*. But there, he was obliged to knuckle down to a smart script (by Nora Ephron) and a director (Rob Reiner) who knew how to use his weaselly abrasiveness and harmonise it with Meg Ryan's soft dippiness. Almost any good romantic comedy involves some such chemical reaction where two incompatibles foment violently before settling down to a poised and witty equilibrium. *Forget Paris* is a dreadful romantic comedy, and not because it doesn't play by the rules.

You can see that Mickey and Ellen are meant to be a pair of mixed nuts. Mickey is your standard all-American squirt, wily, hard-driving, untutored and beneath it all a quivering pile of goo; Ellen is the cool cosmopolitanite



Laughter and forgetting: Debra Winger, Billy Crystal

who knows about culture (although this amounts to a quick sighting of the Mona Lisa and a taste for Andrew Lloyd Webber) but longs for a belly-laugh. The ostensible trouble with these two is that neither will forget Paris - that is, climb down from their dream and face the compromises and mutual adjustments that an ordinary life together entails. The real trouble turns out to be the sustaining myth of all romantic comedy: men and women belong to alien species, and if that's terrible, aren't we lucky just the same?

But though the movie endorses the letter of the genre, it violates its democratic spirit. Maybe one can't really expect the beautifully attuned sparring of a Tracy and Hepburn; still, it's dismaying to watch Crystal, who directed and wrote the script (with Lowell Ganz and Babaloo Mandel), indulge in a display of shameless, unilateral mugging at the expense of his co-star. Debra Winger is tossed one gag where she must charge about with a live pigeon stuck to her head; and a few times, she gets to use that splendid horsey laugh. Otherwise, the whole show is Crystal's, and he sinks it with a persona so obnoxiously manic the subsidiary characters keep having to remind you what a charmer Mickey is reputed to be. The lack of teamwork has a not unexpected result: one doesn't much care whether the screwball duo irons things out, since there's not the slightest hint of chemistry between them.

Officially, the movie keeps its moral books on the up and up: it says that both parties are right, and both wrong. However, the emotional stress is made to fall squarely on Mickey during their numerous separations - so Ellen actually comes off as a bit of an inscrutable bitch who refuses this starved little sad sack the affection he continuously craves. Crystal hogs the pathos as greedily as he does the punchlines. One notices, for instance, how much gloppy

sentiment gets squeezed out of Mickey's relationship with his dead father, whereas Ellen's senile one is used merely as the butt of his comic frustration (in this two-bit role, William Hickey still manages the most polished playing in the picture).

There's no denying that Mickey and Ellen's problems (conflicting schedules, independence versus security, and so forth) are recognisable. But they are also the hoariest of contemporary couple clichés, and require astute writing and acting to put them over. The tinny, perfunctory squabbles here carry little conviction, and the film-makers seem to know it for someone has elected to drown out everything with a wall-to-wall score (bastardised jazz, perky Parisian music and romantic standards made to sound incredibly tacky in context) that tries to cattle-prod the viewer into feeling *something*.

Winger is not the only wasted talent in the movie: there is also the likably hardboiled Cathy Moriarty and the terrific Julie Kavner (cracking the same dumb Weight Watchers jokes she did on *Rhoda* 20 years ago). They and the other minor players narrate the story in relays, but why bother with this device if you don't intend to throw contrasting lights on the protagonists (most obviously, along gender lines)? However, *Rashomon* this isn't, and Crystal seems afraid to go over his audience's head. From the evidence, that audience would appear to comprise those likely to be slain by the assorted cheese jokes (French and Swiss) or by such thigh-slappers as Mickey's strenuous efforts in the cubicle at the fertility clinic. True, romantic comedy can employ farcical or cartoonish elements successfully, as *Bringing Up Baby* - and later *Moonstruck* - so delightfully proved. But even low buffoonery takes tact, and that's what Crystal hasn't got a lot of.

Peter Matthews

Funny Bones

USA/United Kingdom 1994

Director: Peter Chelsom

Certificate
15
Distributor
Buena Vista
Production Company
Hollywood Pictures
Company
Executive Producer
Nicholas Frye
Producers
Simon Fields
Peter Chelsom
Co-producer
Laurie Borg
Associate Producers
Peter McMillan
Las Vegas:
Lester Berman
Production Co-ordinators
Tania Windsor
Las Vegas:
Dee Whitehurst
Blackpool Unit Manager
John Finn
Location Managers
Tony Clarkson
Las Vegas:
Don Newman
Assistant Directors
Michael Zimbrich
Andrew Wood
Cliff Lanning
Toby Ford
Geoff Dibben
Robert Grayson
Las Vegas:
James LaRocca
Greg Zekowski
Jeff Kay
Script Supervisors
June McDonald
Las Vegas:
Barbara Thaxton
Casting
UK:
Janey Fothergill
Maggie Lunn
USA:
Mary Gail Artz
Barbara Cohen
French:
Kate Dowd
Screenplay
Peter Chelsom
Peter Flannery
Director of Photography
Eduardo Serra
Camera Operators
Michael Roberts
Kate Robinson
Underwater:
Michael Valentine
Editor
Martin Walsh
Production Designer
Caroline Hanania
Art Directors
Andrew Munro
Las Vegas:
Jon Spinson
Set Decorator
Tracey Gallacher
Special Effects Supervisor
Tom Harris
Mechanical Effects
Any Effects
Design:
Ralph McNeill
Costume Design
Lindy Hemming
Costume Supervisor
John Scott
Chief Make-up Artist
Pat Hay
Chief Hairstylist
Steven Rose
Music/Music
Arrangements/
Orchestrations
John Altman
Music Producer
Amanda Hughes
Music Editor
Dina Eaton
Songs/Music Extracts
"La Mer", "Beyond the Sea (La Mer)" by and performed by Charles

Trenet; "La Queue de tortue" performed by Nathan Abshire; "Boogie Chillen" by John Lee Hooker, Bernard Besman, performed by John Lee Hooker; "Me and My Chauffeur Blues" by Ernest Lawler; "Englishmen Never Make Love by Day" by Walter Leigh, Herbert Farjeon; "Be My Love" by Nicholas Brodsky, Sammy Cahn, performed by Vernon Midgeley; "Yeh Yeh" by Rodgers Grant, Pat Patrick, Jon Hendricks; "The Penguin" by Raymond Scott, performed by Raymond Scott Quintette; "Walking the Blues" by Jack Dupree, Teddy McCrae, performed by Willie Dixon; "Diggin' My Potatoes" by Sunny Broonzy, performed by Washboard Sam; "Uska Dara" by Stella Lee, performed by Eartha Kitt; "I Put a Spell on You" by Jay Hawkins, performed by Nina Simone; "Caravan" by and performed by Duke Ellington; "It Must Be Jelly, 'Cause Jam Don't Shake Like That" by J. C. MacGregor, Sunny Skylar, George Williams, performed by Glenn Miller; "Bolero" by Maurice Ravel
Choreography
Christina Avery
Supervising Sound Editor
Glenn Freemantle
Dialogue Editor
Peter Elliott
ADR Editor
Keith Lowes
Foley Editor
Peter Holt
Sound Mixers
Peter Lindsay
Las Vegas:
Bill Daly
Sound Re-recordists
Dean Humphreys
Tim Cavagin
Foley Artists
Dianne Greaves
Jack Stew
Swaypole Technical Adviser
"Fattini"
Circus Consultant
David Barnes
Stunt Co-ordinator
Simon Crane

Cast
Oliver Platt
Tommy Fawkes
Jerry Lewis
George Fawkes
Lee Evans
Jack Parker
Leslie Caron
Katie Parker
Richard Griffiths
Jim Minty
Oliver Reed
Dolly Hopkins
George Carl
Thomas Parker
Freddie Davis
Bruno Parker
Ian McNeice
Stanley Sharkey
Christopher Greet
Lawrence Berger
Peter Gunn
Nicky

Gavin Millar
Steve Campbell
William Hootkins
Al
Terence Bigby
Billy Mann
Ruta Lee
Laura Fawkes
Peter Pamela Rose
Jenny
Ticky Holgado
Battiston
Oliver Py
Barre
Mouss
Poquelin
Peter McManara
Canavan
Richard Platt
Bellows
François Domange
Pirard
Harold Nicholas
Hal Dalzell
George Khan
Francesco
Ian Rowe
Ringmaster
Phil Atkinson
Nick Coppin
Policemen
Jona Jones
Security Guard
Tony Barton
Mike Newman
Comedians
Ruth Kettlewell
Camilla Powell
Peter Morgan
Gofor
Fred Evans
Mr Pearce
George Raistrick
Club Owner
Mickey Baker
Mayor
Reg Griffiths
Duggie Chapman
Tony Peers
Andy Rashleigh
Reporters
Phil Kelly
Dave Flame & The Barbarians
Lee Jellyhead & The Ballet Hooligans
Bobbie Roberts & Elephants
Themselves

Andy Thompson
Peter Brande
Leo the Leprechaun
Frank Harvey
Backward Talking Man
Anthony Irvine
Iceman
Eileen Bell
Doggyduo
Rusty Goffe
Bagpipe Playing Dwarf
Terri Carol
Paper Tearer
Sadie Corre
Poodle Woman
Freddie Cox
Frank Cox
Cox Twins
Shane Robinson
Bastard Son of Louis XIV
Benji Ming
Plastic Cup Smasher
Zipporah Simon
Puppeter
Maudie Blake
Musical Saw Player
Andras Baniaki
Ring Boy
Laci Endresz Jr
Juggler
Brian Webb
Little Firewater
Peter Martin
Skipper
Chloe Treend
Andrea Bretherick
Lisa Henson
Rebecca Metcalfe
Camilla Simon
Tina Yoxall
Tropicana Dancers
Amir Fawzi
Little Tommy
"Sniff"
Toast
Mr Mark Raffles
Mrs Mark Raffles
The Wychwoods

11,492 feet
128 minutes
Dolby stereo
In colour
Prints by
Technicolor

When he sees the Parker Brothers' act, Tommy realises that George, who once had performed with them, stole their material, and that Jack is also his half-brother. Tommy confronts George, who has arrived in England. Jack and Tommy steal the Frenchman's feet from the mortuary and return them to the French smugglers. Jack and Tommy rehearse their routine. Jack shows George a trick that involves an iron bar hidden in a rolled up newspaper. Flashbacks reveal further details of Jack's adolescence: he had killed a man in the course of an act involving the newspaper trick, and had spent time in a home for maladjusted children. George is shamed into arranging a show that will feature both the Parkers.

On the night of the show, Jack, disguised as a tramp, rushes into the ring. He climbs a 50-foot pole and sways wildly about the crowd. A policeman climbs up after him and Jack hits him. The policeman falls, but Jack catches him, saving him from death. Tommy is revealed as the policeman.

Following *Treacle* and *Hear My Song*, *Funny Bones* is the third in a trilogy of films based loosely upon director Peter Chelsom's Blackpool childhood. It is an affectionate portrayal of his hometown, replete with fleeting, rich caricatures of the type of people one might expect to find in a declining British holiday resort. Tommy and George remember Blackpool's comedy circuit as something golden and this is reflected in sumptuous cinematography. Beyond this, *Funny Bones* is also a highly successful film which explores convincingly the darker side of comic nature.

The vehicle for much of this is Lee Evans. A rubber-boned comedian whose repertoire of physical expression is truly remarkable, Evans brings to the central role of Jack a real, dangerous and indefinable tension. Having honed his talents on the stand-up circuit before making his recent transition to British television comedy, Evans fills the big screen with ease. The points at which he plays himself as a performer make for truly edgy viewing. The difficulties in making sense of the origins of Jack's behavioural problems have more to do with the slow, suspended way that Chelsom and his co-

writer Peter Flannery have chosen to reveal the interconnecting histories of the Fawkeses and Parkers.

In retrospect, this approach generates few story problems. Chelsom's slow, revelatory narrative is coupled with a steady use of oddly-coloured flashback scenes as a device which – literally – illuminates the past. In this manner, Jack's sway-pole act might be read as the character's transition to a saner state, as if the emergence of Tommy, the truth about Katie's affair and the circus ring killing, all function to bring about a new clarity and a consequent abnormal reaction. A similar process operates around Tommy: by returning to Blackpool, and as it transpires, the truth of his own particular familial constellation, his separation from his father is complete. Chelsom's characters and actors are so strong that the discontinuities of the plot are effectively eclipsed. This is not to say that they are non-existent. The subplot surrounding the French sailors and Oliver Reed as Dolly – an improbably camp villain – seems tacked onto the film to provide respite from Evans' commanding role.

On a larger scale, *Funny Bones'* relationship to the film and televisual world is worth noting. Through Katie and the splendidly dour Parker brothers, Chelsom celebrates music hall, a tradition that has been lost in a televisual age. As George, the big shot American comedian whose lopsided charisma induces standing ovations across Middle America, Jerry Lewis recapitulates elements of his role in Martin Scorsese's *King of Comedy*. Lewis is not kidnapped by fanatics and held to ransom as he was in this earlier film, but his character here is nevertheless out of touch with the idea of comedy. "Some people just are funny," he tells Tommy, "others learn funny. You either have, or you don't have, funny bones." This is a neat line, but it glibly ignores the craft resources of the trained comic. Evans, with Oliver Platt's Tommy as his straight man, exploits perfectly the cusp that separates humour from tragedy. If laughter can be understood as the product, not only of surprise and dislocated scenarios, but as a release from tension, then Chelsom's film provides a deft exposition.

Louise Gray



Sawdust memories: Lee Evans

Higher Learning

USA 1995

Director: John Singleton

Certificate
15
Distributor
Columbia TriStar
Production Company
New Deal Production
For Columbia Pictures
Producers
John Singleton
Paul Hall
Co-producer
Dwight Alonzo
Williams
Production Co-ordinator
Elyse Katz
Unit Production Manager
Roger Joseph Pugliese
Location Manager
Elisa Ann Conant
2nd Unit Director
Peter A. Ramsey
Assistant Directors
Bruce Franklin
Sandra M. Middleton
Algric Leo Chaplin
Script Supervisor
Dawn Gilliam
Casting
Jaki Brown-Karman
Kimberly Hardin
Screenplay
John Singleton
Director of Photography
Peter Lyons Collister
Camera Operator
C. Mitchell Amundsen
Editor
Bruce Cannon
Production Designer
Keith Brian Burns
Art Director
Richard Holland
Set Design
Charles Daboub Jnr
Set Decorator
Michael C. Claypool
Sculptures
Michelle Millay
Costume Design
Carol Oditz
Wardrobe
Maritza L. Garcia-Roddy
Lahly Poore
Make-up
Alvechia Ewing
Beverly Jo Pryor
Hairstylists
Paulletta O. Lewis
Linda Arnold
Title Design
Elaine Bass
Saul Bass
Opticals
Cinema Research
Corporation
Music
Stanley Clarke
Music Supervisor
Danny Branson
Music Editor
Carlton Kaller
Music Co-ordinator
Daryl Pierce
Songs/Music Extracts
"Higher" by O'Shea
Jackson, Anthony
Wheaton, performed
by Ice Cube; "Situation:
Grimm" by Rojai S.
Trawick, E. Clark, Craig
Steve Kenoly,
performed by Mista
Grimm; "Losing My
Religion" by Bill Berry,
Peter Buck, Mike Mills,
Michael Stipe,
"Butterfly" by Tori
Amos, performed by
Tori Amos; "Year of the
Boomerang", "Tire Me"
by Rage Against The
Machine, Zack de la
Rocha, performed by
Rage Against The
Machine; "Higher
Learning/Time For
Change" by Simon
Bartholomew, Andrew

Levy, N'Dea Davenport,
Jan Kincaid, performed
by The Brand New
Heavies; "Soul
Searchin' (I Wanna
Know If It's Mine)"
by and performed by
Me'Shell NdegéOcello;
"Ask of You" by and
performed by Raphael
Saadiq; "Phobia" by
Rico Wade, Raymon
Murray, Patrick Brown,
Andre Benjamin,
Ruben Bailey,
performed by OutKast;
"Don't Have Time"
by and performed
by Liz Phair; "Eye"
by Michael Kutch,
Colleen Fitzpatrick,
performed by Eve's
Plum; "Super Monkey"
by Michael Starkey,
Mario Jimenez, David
Latter, Mark Fraser,
performed by Stanford
Prison Experiment;
"Wait and See" by Joel
Bell, Peter Pagonis,
Tom Walter, Pierre
Gallard, performed by
Mrs God; "Let's Stay
Together" by Al Green,
Willie Mitchell,
Al Jackson Jnr,
performed by Al Green;
"Cornerman" by
Roderick Wolgamott,
Anisa Romero, Joseph
Howard, Gordon
Halpern, Todd Robbins,
Ben Ireland, performed
by Sky Cries Mary; "It's
Only Money", "Swamp
Song" by John Easdale,
performed by
Dramarama; "By Your
Side" by and performed
by Zhané; "Higher
Learning" by D-
Knowledge, Mark
Shelby, performed
by D-Knowledge,
Black/Note; "To Be
Young Gifted and
Black" by Nina Simone,
Weldon Irvine,
performed by Aretha
Franklin; "Give Me
Your Love" by and
performed by Curtis
Mayfield; "Corner Of
My Mind" by Dan Ores,
Tim Reiland, Tom
Kutzer, Mike Tannis,
Mike Murray,
performed by Blanket
Party; "Lost My Motto"
by Robert Harrison,
performed by Cotton
Mather; "Formaldehyde"
by Dave Hill, John
Borland, Tim Parnin,
Pat Casa, performed
by Sons of Elvis;
"What Is A Man" by
Doris McNeil, John
Bristol, "A Pimp"
by Otis O'Solomon,
"Tenements" by
Richard Dedeaux,
performed by The
Watts Prophets;
"Shake" by Tony Srock,
Greg Lucas, performed
by Final Cut; "Memory
Lane" by Minnie
Riperton, Dick
Rudolph, Kenneth St
Lewis, Gene Dozier,
performed by Minnie
Riperton
Supervising Sound Editor
Greg Hedgepeth
Sound Editors
Christopher S. Aud

Steve Ticknor
Willie Allen
Dave Williams
Supervising ADR Editor
Bobbi Banks
Production Mixer
Veda Campbell
Sound Re-recording Mixers
Paul Massey
Chris David
Don Digirolamo
Stunt Co-ordinator
Bob Minor

Cast
Omar Epps
Malik Williams
Kristy Swanson
Kristen Connor
Michael Rapaport
Remy
Jennifer Connelly
Taryn
Ice Cube
Fudge
Jason Wiles
Wayne
Tyra Banks
Deja
Cole Hauser
Scott Moss
Laurence Fishburne
Professor Maurice
Phipps
Bradford English
Officer Bradley
Regina King
Monet
Busta Rhymes
Dreads
Jay Ferguson
Billy
Andrew Bryniarski
Knocko
Trevor St John
James
Talbert Morton
Erik
Adam Goldberg
David Isaacs
J. Trevor Edmond
Eddie
Bridgette Wilson
Nicole
Kari Salin
Claudia
John Walton Smith Jnr
Coach Davis
Randall Batinkoff
Chad Shadowhill
Malcolm Hornington
Cory

Antonio Todd
Adam
Tim Griffin
Orientation Advisor
Patricia Forte
Sheila Ward
Counsellors
George LePorte
Starting Judge
Warren Olney
TV Reporter
D-Knowledge
Himself
Skip O'Brien
Joe Bugs
Bill Evans
Security Guards
Ernie Singleton
Bedrick Gobert
Bruce Williams
(Fudge's) Homies
Richard B. Alexander
Big Shorty
Michael Buchman Silver
Graham Galloway
Paul Anthony Kropfl
Frat Members
James W. Smith
Walton Greene
Mary Bakjian
Race Officials
Mista Grimm
Drunk Student
Alicia Stevenson
Monet's Friend
Colleen Ann Fitzpatrick
Festival Singer
Robby Parker
Dogman
Pola Maloles
Flyer Girl
Ingrid Walters
Party Girl
Kiante Elam
Black Pepper
Jamie Jo Medearis
White Salt
Rick Avery
Guard Beats Malik
Tony Bonno
Cole McLarty
Gay Victims

11,561 feet
128 minutes

Dolby stereo
In colour
Technicolor



Brothers in arms: Laurence Fishburne, Omar Epps

clashes violently with Malik, who is thrown into doubt about continuing at Columbus. Later, the skinheads and Fudge's posse skirmish.

Kristen organises a Peace-Fest but the skinheads attack it. Remy, on the roof with his rifle, kills Deja: Professor Phipps fails to save her. Malik chases Remy, and fights him. Security drag Malik off and beat him up, then chase Remy, who shoots himself.

At the memorial site for Deja, Malik meets Kristen, who feels responsible and desolate. Malik tells her she can't blame herself. They exchange names for the first time, and shake hands.

● An accurate technician, John Singleton is no screen dialectician, no Spike Lee. You won't leave the theatre arguing loudly with your partner. There's nothing that surprising in this choices-tragedy, but by refusing to decide quite what he believes, Singleton throws doubt on some of the Hollywood liberal clichés – of character, of solution – that threaten to shape it. He sets these doubts up architecturally rather than dramatically, through the cross-play of affinities and contrasts between characters in not-quite-connected storylines: Kristen/Malik, Fudge/Scott, obviously, but also Fudge/Taryn, Remy/Malik, Remy/Kristen. It's a very *symmetrical* movie.

This works against the urgency it needs: the action (the fight scenes, Deja's bloody death) is episodic, and somewhat defanged. But the symmetry pushes to the front Phipps, the film's key character (and without formal counterweight: he's in fact the only teacher we meet). Pipe-smoking, courteous, Caribbean, he's untypical territory for Laurence Fishburne. It's almost a John Houseman role: a curmudgeon because he wants his pupils to make the most of themselves, and therefore loveable (ultimately). He pushes Malik to do better; not to fall back on excuses or victimhood but to work the system to his advantage. Yet Singleton injects

doubt here too. A refusal to guide those who don't guide themselves may be what turns them toward unthinking tribalism; crusty commitment to higher learning as a good in itself seems irrelevant in the wake of violent death. Is knowledge for the getting of power, or to challenge it? Hasn't education been undermined by the politicisation of information? Although Phipps is exasperated by Kristen's refusal to take a stand in her essays, her sexual confusion is as close to a symbol of civic decency as the film gets; as if not being able to choose is the way out. The heart of the film's central Douglass quote, "without struggle there is no progress", may be the word "struggle" – but the skinheads are reading Hitler's *Mein Kampf* (trans: *My struggle*).

It was brave to take on multicultural intolerance; braver still to refuse the sentimental cop-outs (such as sporting achievement, or the objectivity of the learned). Singleton is mordant about officialdom's institutionalised unfairness, financial, cultural and practical: Security guards always intervene against blacks first, and other things don't come out right, either. He's almost *too* careful with the complex ecologies and etiquettes of American campus life. Even his skinheads are not mere boneheads; indeed, Cole Hauser gives the performance of the film as their sinister-because-foresightful leader. Remy is so whinily unlikeable why would even Nazis put up with him? Malik has good lines, including a 13-word *précis* (which *Hoop Dreams* took three hours to say), hurled at a teammate he's just let down: "All you ever gonna be is a runner. Like a horse. A slave." But the other main characters seem unformed; the secondary characters are little more than ciphers, numbered points in a position paper, which is intelligently presented, but (like Fishburne's Phipps) disappointingly cool and (like Swanson's Kristen) just too vague to be memorable.

Mark Sinker

Land and Freedom

United Kingdom/Spain/Germany 1995

Director: Ken Loach

Certificate

15

Distributor

Artificial Eye

Production Companies

Parallax Pictures/
Messidor Films/Road
Movies Dritte
With the participation
of British Screen/The
European Co-
production Fund (UK)/
Television Española/
Canal Plus (Spain)/BBC
Films/Degeto for ARD
and Filmstiftung
Nordrhein-Westfalen
With the support of
BIM Distribuzione/
Diaphana/the
Eurimages Fund of the
Council of Europe
Developed with the
support of Working
Title

Executive Producers

Sally Hibbin
Gerardo Herrero
Ulrich Felsberg

Producer

Rebecca O'Brien

Associate Producer

Marta Esteban

Production Co-ordinators

Shellie Smith

Nuri Preminger

Production Manager

Yousaf Bokhari

Unit Manager

Pati Rosales

Location Managers

Francesc Codina

Jeff Bowen

Assistant Directors

Javier Chinchilla

Neil Grigson

Julian Hearne

Charlie Lazaro

David Martinez

Paco Calvo

Glenys Davies

Guillermo Escribano

Mick Ward

Script Supervisor

Susanna Lenton

Casting

Marta Valsecchi

Richard Rousseau

Wendy Ettinger

Susie Figgis

Screenplay

Jim Allen

Script Editor

Roger Smith

Director of Photography

Barry Ackroyd

2nd Camera

Jeremy Gee

Nigel Willoughby

Cosmo Campbell

Joan Benet

Editor

Jonathan Morris

Production Designer

Martin Johnson

Set Dresser

Linda Wilson

Special Effects Supervisor

Reyes Abades

Costume Design

Ana Alvargonzalez

United Kingdom:

Daphne Dare

Wardrobe

Lena Mossam

Annie Crawford

Pablo Espinosa

Angie de Saz

Juan Chavaro

David Kipling

Make-up

Anne McEwan

Titles

Peter Watson

Music

George Fenton

Songs/Music Extracts

"A Las Barricadas";

"La Internacional"

by Christianus Geyter

Petrus; "A Las Mujeres";

"Ramona" by Mabel

Wayne, Wolfe Gilbert;

"Si Me Quieres Escribir"

by Juan Ignacio

Cuadrado Bueno

Dubbing Editor

Kevin Brazier

Dubbing Mixer

David Old

Sound Recordist

Ray Beckett

Music Recordist

Paul Hulme

Advisers/Research

Andy Durgan

David Boardman

Joan Rocabert

Coronel Julio Ferrer

Jesus Garcia

Rafael Diaz

Armourer

Tomas Urban

Cast

Ian Hart

David Carne

Rosana Pastor

Blanca

Iciar Bollain

Maite

Tom Gilroy

Gene Lawrence

Marc Martinez

Vidal

Frederic Pierrot

Bernard

Andres Aladren

Sergi Calleja

Raffaele Cantatore

Pascal Demolon

Paul Laverty

Josep Mager

Eoin McCarthy

Jürgen Müller

Roca

Emili Samper

Kim

Suzanne Maddock

Dot

Mandy Walsh

The Militia

Miguel Caballana

Speaker at Meeting

Angela Clarke

Kitty

Rafael Diaz

Barracks Officer

Felicio Pellicer

Nationalist Officer

Ricard Arilla

Priest

Jordi Bauder

Salas

Pep Molina

Pepe

Enriqueta Ferre

Concierge

Asuncion Ryo

Old Woman

Francisco Orella

Casado

Phil O'Brien

Dave Saddon

Ambulance Men

Xavier Amatller

Jaime Prats

Jose Luis Prats

Carles Vilarrasa

On the Train

Fina Alcaniz

Claudio Dominguez

Ernesto Grau

Maria Felch

Maite Lucas

Sebastia Marmaña

Lola Olives

Ma Eugenia Palatsi

Pepa Palatsi

Miguel Quintana

Aniceto Rallo

Paco Rangel

Jose Antonio Rapolles

Consol Segura

Manolo Vicent

Townpeople

David Allen

Manel Anoro

Lali Cambra

Cristobal Estudillo

Adoni Gonzalez

Jose Luis Gonzalez

Marius Lou

Pep Navarro

Antonio Pellicer

Pepe Valenzuela

On the Roof

Joan Pau Romani

Santi Celaya

Josep Galindo

Sergio Garcia

Daniel Muñoz

In the cafe

Neus Agullo

Pep Cortes

Blanca's Parents

8,830 feet

110 minutes

Dolby stereo

In colour

In present-day Liverpool an old man, David Carne, suffers a heart attack and dies. Going through his effects his granddaughter, Kim, finds letters, photographs and newspaper cuttings from the Spanish Civil War, and a knotted red kerchief full of dried earth. She starts reading the letters, written by David to his fiancée Kitty....

1936. Roused by the appeal of a Spanish militiaman at a meeting in Liverpool, David tells Kitty he has decided to join the Republican struggle. On a Spanish train he meets Bernard, a French anarchist bound for the militia attached to the revolutionary socialist party POUM.

David is assigned to an international section of the militia headed by Captain Vidal. Among his comrades are Bernard, the American Gene Lawrence, the fiery young Spanish woman Maite, and the Irishman Coogan and his Spanish girlfriend Blanca. Armed with antique German rifles, they engage in trench warfare against the Fascists. The section captures a village, but Coogan is shot dead in the attack. After he and other casualties have been buried, the village holds an impassioned debate on whether to collectivise the former landowner's estate.

The POUM militia are under pressure to merge with the regular Republican army, but despite Gene's advocacy the section votes to stay independent. Training new recruits, David is wounded when his rifle explodes and is sent to hospital in Barcelona. On discharge he seeks out a guesthouse Blanca had recommended and finds her there. They become lovers, but the next morning she discovers a regular army uniform in his rucksack and storms out. As a member of the Communist International Brigade David is sent to fight anarchist forces holding the telephone exchange - since according to the now-dominant Stalinist line groups like POUM and the anarchists are "social fascists" sabotaging the war effort. Disgusted, he quits Barcelona and rejoins Blanca and his other comrades at the front.

The militia capture an exposed advance position, but outnumbered and ill-equipped are forced to retreat. As they recuperate Republican troops arrive, with Gene among them - not to back up the militia but to disarm and arrest them. The militia scream defiance and in the uproar Blanca is shot dead. David escorts her body back to her village, and gathers earth from her grave in her kerchief before quitting Spain. At David's funeral, Kim scatters the Spanish earth on his own coffin.

The heroic, uncomplicated myth of the Spanish Civil War as the first great struggle of the Left against Fascism - "Raise the red flag triumphantly/For Communism and for liberty" rhapsodised the young poet John Cornford only days before his death in battle - has long been shadowed by a more sombre account: that in Spain the popular revolution was cynically betrayed by its own allies. It's this view, most famously propounded by George Orwell in *Homage to Catalonia*, that Ken Loach and Jim Allen wholeheartedly adopt in *Land and Freedom*. Indeed, David Carne's experiences, his progress from naive idealism to disillusionment, closely parallel those of Orwell himself - and, in all likelihood, those of many other starry-eyed young leftists who rallied to the cause.

In the past, Loach's passionate political commitment has sometimes (as in his previous film, *Ladybird Ladybird*) tended to swamp his subjects, making them seem parochial or tendentious. In *Land and Freedom* he's found a theme whose historical resonance matches the intensity and sweep of his vision. The film pulsates with fierce exhilaration and anger that feed off each other: exhilaration at a moment within living memory when everything mattered; anger that it could all be so callously extinguished in the name of expediency. At the film's climax, when the battered POUM militia, screaming with fury, helplessly confront the new rifles and pristine uniforms of the Republican army, the sense of blind, stupid waste boils off the screen.

But the heart of the film isn't in its battle scenes, shot though they are with an immediacy and a lack of bombast that makes them feel wholly authentic. The key scene of *Land and Freedom* is a political debate - and if that sounds dull, it's precisely because part of the great betrayal Loach is on about is that politics have been made to appear dry, remote, and irrelevant to our daily lives. This debate, over whether to collectivise the land in a

newly-liberated village, is sinewy, pungent and anything but dull since, to the people taking part in it, it's no question of dogma but a matter of burning, immediate concern. Land and freedom: in the film, as in its title, the two are inextricably linked. Blanca, shot down by the Republican army, is buried as she'd have wished in collectivised land. A few weeks later, it's returned by the government to private hands, the freedom she fought for stolen from her even in death.

Loach's regular filming technique - shooting strictly in sequence, issuing the script only day by day - pays huge dividends here. The cast - especially Rosana Pastor as Blanca and Marc Martinez as Vidal - give ensemble performances vibrating with the fervour that stems from deep identification. As David, Ian Hart brings to the role all the dry Scouse wit of his two incarnations as John Lennon, adding to it an eager vulnerability that makes his final disenchantment all the more moving. "Had we succeeded," he tells Kitty, "we could have changed the world."

But if Loach's film is a threnody for what could have been, it's also a celebration - capturing the fire and ebullience of those few months when politics was life and breath, when the Internationale could bring tears to the eyes and people could assure each other with total conviction, "Comrade, tomorrow is ours." And there's a challenge here, too, aimed at the apathy of an age that regards such attitudes as matter for nostalgia or contempt, and dismisses the issues as over and dead. The revolution that was betrayed in Spain was the same one betrayed in Russia and Eastern Europe, and the fallout from that betrayal still drifts down on us today. The very first shot of *Land and Freedom* shows the dank, grimy stairwell of a Liverpool council block; the only splash of colour is a National Front logo scrawled on the wall. Loach and Allen's message is unmistakable: the struggle continues.

Philip Kemp



Homage to conviction: Ian Hart

A Low Down Dirty Shame

USA 1994

Director: Keenan Ivory Wayans

Certificate
18

Distributor
Buena Vista

Production Company
Hollywood Pictures Company

Executive Producers
Eric L. Gold
Lee R. Mayes

Producers
Joe Roth
Roger Birnbaum

Head of Production
Ned Dowd

Associate Producer
Michael Waxman

Production Co-ordinator
Melissa Cooper

Post-production Manager
Rebekah Rudd

Unit Production Manager
Charles Schlissel

Location Manager
Greg Lazzaro

2nd Unit Director
Charles Picerni

Assistant Directors
Michael Waxman
Jonathan Oliver
Rebecca Strickland

Script Supervisor
Marion Tumen

Casting
Robi Reed-Humes

Associates:
Tony Lee
Andrea Reed

ADR Voice:
Barbara Harris

Screenplay
Keenan Ivory Wayans

Director of Photography
Matthew F. Leonetti

Camera Operator
Craig Haagensen

Opticals
Buena Vista Imaging

Editor
John F. Link

Associate Editor
William Meshover

Production Designer
Robb Wilson King

Art Director
Richard L. Johnson

Set Design
Ron Yates

Set Decorator
Lance Lombardo

Set Dresser
Kinney Booker

Special Effects Co-ordinator
Bruno van Zeebroeck

Costume Design
Francine Jamison-Tanchuck

Costume Supervisor
Frank Perry Rose

Key Make-up
Stephanie Cozart

Key Hairstylist
Maxine Rennes-Gunderson

Title Design
Schluter Design

Music
Marcus Miller

Electronic Orchestration
Eric Persing

Music Editor
Earl Ghaffari

Score Consultant
David I Ward II

Songs/Music Extracts
"Shame" by Reuben Cross, John Fitch, performed by (1) Evelyn Champagne King, (2) Zhane; "Turn it Up" by James Harris III (p/k/a 'Jimmy Jam'), Terry Lewis, Raja-Nee, The Isley Brothers, Chris Jasper, performed by Raja-Nee (sample of "Make Me Say it Again, Girl" by The Isley Brothers); "Oye como va" by Tito Puente, performed by Santana; "Stroke You Up" by R. Kelly, performed by Changing Faces; "Watch Me" by B. Romeo, H. Browne, W. Mowatt; "Say it Loud (I'm Black and Proud)" by James Brown, Alfred Ellis; "Get Up (I Feel Like Being a Sex Machine)" by James Brown, Bobby Byrd, Ron Lenhoff; "Old Arrival" by Hilton Ruiz, performed by Tito Puente; "Guantanamera" by José Fernandez Diaz, performed by Sidney James; "Down 4 Whateva" by Larry 'Rock' Campbell, Latece Wallace, Onyea Ponder, B. Romeo, S. Law, C. Wheeler, P. Hooper, performed by Nuttin' NYCe (sample of "Back to Life" by B. Romeo, S. Law, C. Wheeler, P. Hooper); "Mind Blowin'" by Larry 'Rock' Campbell, J. Carter, K. Fingers, M. White, The Isley Brothers, Chris Jasper, performed by Smooth (samples of "Brazilian Rhyme" by M. White, "For the Love of You" by The Isley Brothers, Chris Jasper, performed by The Isley Brothers); "The Thing I Like" by R. Kelly, performed by Aaliyah; "Sidewalk Talk" by Madonna, performed by Jellybean; "Azukiki" by and performed by Tito Puente; "Jefferson's Blues" by Ben Rizzo; "La Bamba" by Ritchie Valens; "Short Short Man" by Charlie Babie, Manfred Mohr, performed by 20 Fingers, Gillette; "I Can Go Deep" by Mike Chapman, Trent Thomas, Thomas Evans, Darnell Ward, performed by Silk; "The Power" by Benito Benitez, John Garrett III, Mark James, Robert Frazier, Toni C., performed by Chill Rob G; "Homie Lover Friend (Lookin' for My Homie Mix)" by and performed by R. Kelly; "Gotta Get Yo' Groove On" by James Harris III (p/k/a 'Jimmy Jam'), Terry Lewis, Tevin Campbell, performed by Tevin Campbell

Score Consultant
David I. Ward III

Supervising Sound Editors
Gregory M. Gerlich
Gary S. Gerlich

Sound Editors
Teri E. Dorman
Gordon Davidson
David M. Horton

Andy Kopetzky
David Kulczycki
Supervising ADR Editor
Jerelyn J. Harding
ADR Editors
Lauren Palmer
Andrea Horta

Foley Editors
David L. Horton Jnr
Scot Tinsley

Sound Mixers
Willie Burton

Music:
Alan Meyerson

ADR Mixers
Robert Deschaine
Jeff Gomillion

Foley Mixer
Mary Jo Lange

Foley Recordist
Carolyn Tapp

Sound Recordist
Charlie Ajar Jnr

Sound Re-recording Mixers
Michael C. Casper
Daniel J. Leahy
Thomas Meloeny

Foley Artists
John Roesch
Hilda Hodges

Technical Adviser
Dale Dye

Stunt Co-ordinators
Charles Picerni
Billy Burton

Cast
Keenan Ivory Wayans
Andre Shame
Charles S. Dutton
Sonny Rothmiller
Jada Pinkett
Peaches
Salli Richardson
Angela Flowers
Andrew Divoff
Ernesto Mendoza
Corwin Hawkins
Wayman
Gary Cervantes
Luis
Gregory Sierra
Captain Nunez
Kim Wayans
Diane
Andrew Shaifer
Bernard
Christopher Spencer
Benny
Devin Devasquez
Mendoza's Girl

John Capodice
Mob Boss
Craig Ryan Ng
Chun Yung Fat
Donald Diamont
Chad
Randy Hall
Hank
Doug Kruse
Skinhead Speaker
Michael Bofshever
Mr Gold
Renee Hicks
Hooker
Robert Schimmel
The John
Kristina Wagner
Lisa
Bob Hughes
Mike Echols
Luanne Crawford
Cops
Dominique Jennings
Funeral Guest
Lisa Mende
Chad's Agent
De-Andre L. Russell
Mailman at Post Office
Derek Woolley
Maitre'd
Diane Little
Waitress
Erika Monroe
Gloria Pawlak
Customers
Shawn Lusader
Mark Ian Simon
Lovers
Rafael H. Robredo
Heavy
Pillow
Body Builder
Michael Wheels Parise
Man in Bath
Twist
Young Police Officer
Bobby Jen
Hotel Thug
Nikki Fritz
Exotic Dancer
Andrea Evans
Denise

9,037 feet
100 minutes

Dolby stereo
In colour
Prints by
Technicolor



Sucka's revenge: Keenan Ivory Wayans

finds Angela retrieving \$20 million that she stole from Mendoza. He agrees to an exchange – Peaches for Angela and the money – but manages to overcome both Mendoza's henchmen and Rothmiller's DEA troops. He takes Mendoza alive but Angela shoots him. She threatens to kill Shame since she knows he will never let her keep the money, but Peaches intervenes and triumphs over Angela. As the police take Angela away, Shame realises that Peaches is the woman he really wants.

A Low Down Dirty Shame is an action-comedy, but so is every other action movie these days. From its roots in the James Bond series, the genre as a whole has increasingly embraced tongue-in-cheek humour, a trend which reaches a peak in *Demolition Man* and blows itself to pieces, memorably, in *The Last Action Hero*. So established is this in the minds of western audiences that when faced with genuine romanticism in action, as in John Woo's movies, they are inclined to read it as camp. Self-parody undermines our ability to read the clash of good and evil innocently. Thus, in this summer's blockbusters Judge Dredd is well-meaning but none too bright, the lads in *Bad Boys* are suspected of being lovers, and Batman has a rubber fetish and needs to see a shrink.

These films survive – when they do – in a delicate balance: comedy makes the adrenaline rush safe without lessening the pleasure. *A Low Down Dirty Shame*, however, is unevenly weighted. Writer/director/star Keenan Ivory Wayans' debut feature *I'm Gonna Git You, Sucka* was an out-and-out parody of blaxploitation films and *Shame*, too, is a very funny film. But whereas in *Sucka* Wayans deliberately chose stunt doubles that looked nothing like his cast, here he performs most of his stunts himself: for much of the time *Shame* (like Shame the character) wants to be taken seriously but, as an action

director, Wayans has neither the technique nor the budget to deliver. The use of slow motion, for example, is so hackneyed that it looks like another joke: as yet another thug moves towards him with the grace and precision of an action replay, Shame's wide-eyed gaze is embarrassingly reminiscent of Leslie Nielsen in the *Naked Gun* films. Wayans insists, "It's not a parody. It's taking a step in a different direction". But only the logic of parody enables him to switch from disgusted alarm on waking in the arms of Peaches' gay housemate Wayman to putting camp bitchiness when he tries to convince Wayman's lover that he has replaced him in order to blackmail Wayman into doing him a favour. Frank Drebin could get away with such a quick change; James Bond never could (or would). In such an atmosphere, the pretensions to action in earnest – already weak – cannot survive.

This uneasiness is partly redeemed by the central performances: Wayans' Shame is attractive and assured. Jada Pinkett, of *Menace II Society* and *Jason's Lyric*, takes naturally to comedy and plays Peaches with a slightly manic charm. As Wayman, Corwin Hawkins (who died last year and to whom the film is dedicated) manages a surprising amount within the stereotype to which he is confined. Only Charles S. Dutton, as Rothmiller, is out of place: bizarrely self-righteous, as if he'd developed too much sympathy for his character.

Dutton and Hawkins' performances could stand for the worst and best aspects of the movie as a whole. When it begins to take its own clichés seriously, and plays them for drama or romance, it remains unconvincing; but for much of the time it relaxes and baits these clichés with an amiable wit that is never less than watchable. *Shame* cannot do straight action – if it could only come out and admit this it would be a lot more comfortable.

Max Schaefer

The Man in My Life (L'Homme de ma vie)

France/Canada 1993

Director: Jean Charles Tacchella

Certificate
12
Distributor
Gala
Production Companies
Optima productions/
Cinex Films/Ciné
Cinq/Prodeve
In association with
Sofia Valor 2
Producer
Gabriel Boustani
Co-producer
Justine Heroux
Associate Producers
Jean-Paul de Vidas
Roger André Larrieu
Production Executive
Anne-Marie Otte
Production Manager
Gérard Monier
Script Supervisor
Marie Beaulieu
Casting
Ginette Tacchella
Catherine Maloubier
Screenplay
Jean Charles Tacchella
Director of Photography
Dominique Le Rigoleur
Camera Operator
Eric Faucherre
Editor
Marie-Aimée Debril
Production Designer
Serge Douy
Costume Design
Sylvie de Segonzac
Make-up
Claire Blondel
Hairstylist
Bob Pritchett
Music
Raymond Alessandrini
Choreography
Arthur Plasschaert
Sound Editor
Anne Baronnet
Sound Recordists
Henri Blondeau
Jean-Paul Loublier
Sound Mixer
Jean-Paul Loublier
Sound Effects
André Naudin
Stunt Co-ordinator
Daniel Verité
Karate Consultant
Jean-Pierre Fischer
Cast
Maria de Medeiros
Aimée
Thierry Fontineau
Maurice
Jean-Pierre Bacri
Malcolm

Anne Letourneau
Catherine
Ginette Garcin
Arlette
Ginette Mathieu
Prudence
Alain Doutey
Alain
Alix de Konopka
Clarisse
Carmela Valente
Liouchka
Bertrand Lacy
Nicolas
Frédérique Lazarini
Sympathetic Young
Woman
Emmanuelle Oriheul
Perfume Saleswoman
Samuel Sogno
Maitre'd
Blanche Ravalec
Karate Client
Olivier Lebeau
Regular Customer
Fulbert Janin
Mayor
Andrée Damant
Malcolm's Mother
Jean-Philippe Ancelle
Gérard Lemaire
Malcolm's Friends
Véronique Boulanger
Flavienne, Bridesmaid
Henri Gruyman
Chef
Marie Garcin
Paullette, Maid
Carol Styczen
Lionel
Manoelle Gaillard
Woman who mistakes
Maurice for a beggar
Françoise Caillaud
Rendezvous Apartment
Landlord
Jean-Michel Mole
Police Commissioner
Nicolas Perrot
Court Clerk
Didier Harlmann
Private Detective
Brigitte Boucher
Maurice's Concierge
Mario-Ange Lelli
Young Woman in
Street

9,276 feet
103 minutes

Dolby stereo
In colour
Subtitles

When her ex-boyfriend Alain announces he is getting married, unemployed Aimée decides to find herself a husband and goes to visit Maurice, a misanthropic secondhand bookseller she once bought a book from. They go to dinner, but discovering that his shop is soon to be repossessed, she decides he is not the man for her. The next time they meet, she tells him that she has found herself a husband, restaurant critic Malcolm, and that she wants Maurice to be a witness at the wedding. The night before the wedding, she visits Maurice again and they sleep together for the first time. At the wedding, Aimée sets Maurice up with

her friend Catherine, a successful businesswoman who Aimée thinks may be able to lend Maurice the money he needs to set up a new bookshop.

Maurice and Catherine start dating, but the relationship falters when Catherine puts pressure on Maurice to change his career. Meanwhile Aimée, disillusioned with the boorish Malcolm, persuades Maurice to meet her for an assignation at a hotel where she has arranged for a private eye to catch them in flagrante, so facilitating her divorce. Maurice goes along with the plan, but the next time Aimée goes to visit his apartment, she finds that he has moved out. Meeting Alain on the street, Aimée decides to move back in with him. But her mother, who knows Maurice is perfect for Aimée, tracks him down and asks them to dinner together. They resist her mother's matchmaking plans, but after Aimée has driven Maurice home to his new, modest flat-cum-warehouse, she turns up again in floods of tears having learned that Alain expects her to look after his children. Maurice and Aimée lie down together on a pile of books. Three weeks later they emerge into the streets again, seeing the world in a new, benevolent light.

Now 70, Jean-Charles Tacchella is one of those French purveyors of smooth, lightweight, bourgeois comedies of manners whose work seldom travels outside his native country. Since the international success of his 1975 hit *Cousin Cousine*, which earned an Oscar nomination before suffering being remade as *Cousins* at the hands of Joel Schumacher, the only one of his films to secure a UK release has been 1985's *Escalier C*.

The international appeal of *L'Homme de ma vie* rests on the fragile presence of Portuguese actress Maria de Medeiros, fresh from her performance as Fabienne in *Pulp Fiction*. The role of Aimée, a

French Holly Golightly for the 90s, harks back to Medeiros' role as Anaïs Nin in *Henry And June*, of whose diaries Aimée is an avid fan. *L'Homme de ma vie* is also based on the same fundamental premise of any mainstream Hollywood comedy, introducing two characters who are 'perfect' for each other, and then contriving to keep them apart, though the obstacles here - Aimée's need for a rich husband, Maurice's desire to live alone - are particularly transparent.

What you wouldn't find in the Hollywood version, however, is the continual reference to literature. Maurice peppers his conversation with epigrammatic quips from Victor Hugo, Chateaubriand, Sacha Guitry and Georges Simenon, whose statement "If each one of us could make just one other happy, the whole world would know happiness," quoted by Maurice on his first meeting with Aimée, pretty much encapsulates the subsequent message of the film. Aimée first accosts Maurice by telling him that she wants someone to discuss American women novelists with. This is clearly a come-on - the promised conversation never takes place - but Aimée's and Maurice's final embrace on a pile of books symbolises that she has given up her purely material aspirations in favour of the world of ideas represented by Maurice.

Equally characteristic of French comedy is the concentration on eating: the film is made up of one long succession of dinners, at home or in restaurants. The seriousness of Aimée's desire to find a man is acknowledged when she asks her mother to teach her to cook, while the subsequent fate of her marriage to Malcolm is slyly suggested by the wedding reception scene, which is disrupted when the bridegroom harangues the chef about the poor quality of his sea urchin sauce.

John Wrathall



Doing it by the book: Thierry Fontineau, Maria de Medeiros

My Family

USA 1994

Director: Gregory Nava

Certificate
15
Distributor
Entertainment
Production Companies
American Zoetrope/
Anna Thomas/New Line
Cinema/Newcomm
productions
In association with
Majestic Films
American Playhouse
Executive Producers
Francis Ford Coppola
Guy East
Tom Luddy
Lindsay Law
Sergio Molina
Producer
Anna Thomas
Line Producer
Laura Greenlee
Associate Producer
Nancy de Los Santos
Production Executives
Yalda Tehranian
Will Evans
Ruth Jackson
Maggie Pope
Carla Fry
Production Co-ordinators
Pearl A. Lucero
Mexico:
Patricia Mata
Production Managers
Beth de Patie
Mexico:
Maria Elena Mercado
River Unit:
Richard Wright
Location Manager
Martha Claire Pilcher
Post-production Supervisors
Steve Barnett
Kim Aubry
Assistant Directors
Lisa Campbell
Karen Frischmann
Marla Salter
Enrique Vargas
Kris Kringle
Script Supervisor
Jill Gurr
Casting
Janet Hirschenson
Jane Jenkins
Roger Mussenden
Screenplay
Gregory Nava
Anna Thomas
Story
Gregory Nava
Director of Photography
Edward Lachman
River Photography
Carroll Ballard
2nd Unit Director of Photography
Judy Irola
Steadicam Operators
Kirk Gardener
David Luckenbach
Editor
Nancy Richardson
Production Designer
Barry Robinson
Design Consultant
Patssi Valdez
Art Directors
Troy Myers
Co-art Director:
Adam Lustig
Mexico:
Gariela Robles
Set Decorator
Suzette Sheets
Set Dressers
Jeff Snyder
Rochelle Seldin
Mark W. Gantt
Adam R. Pinkstaff
Teusa Koiwai
Costume Design
Tracy Tynan
Wardrobe Supervisor
Tangl Crawford

Make-up
Design:
Ken Diaz
Supervisor:
Mark Sanchez
Hair
Design:
Jacklin Masteran
Key:
Corina C. Durin
Titles/Opticals
Cinema Research
Corporation
Music
Mark McKenzie
Folkloric:
Pepe Avila
Music Supervisor
Kevin Bensom
Songs
"Konex Konex",
"Guacamaya"
performed by Los
Folkloristas; "Rosa de
castilla" performed
by Gerardo Tamez;
"Sugar Time" by
Charlie Phillips, Odis
Echols, performed
by The McGuire Sisters;
"La negra", "La Diana"
(traditional), "Jesuita
en chihuahua" by
Quirino Mendoza,
"Los laureles" by
Salvador Ringel
Gonzalez, performed
by Mariachis los
camperos; "Angel Baby"
by Rosalie Hamlin,
"Are You Really
Sincere" by Mike
Piccirillo, performed
by Jeanette Jurado;
"Tu solo tu" by Felipe
Valdez Leal, performed
by Pedro Infante; "One
Summer Night"
by Danny Webb,
performed by All-4 One;
"Celoso" by JennyLou
Carson, performed by
Mana; "I Love Lucy
Theme" by Eliot Daniel;
"El rey" by and
performed by José
Alfredo Jimenez; "Flor
de canela" (traditional)
performed by Eugenia
Leon, Mariachis los
camperos; "Que rico
el mambo" by and
performed by Perez
Prado; "Down On the
Riverbed" by David
Hidalgo, Louis Perez,
performed by Los
Lobos; "I'm Your
Puppet" by Linden
Oldham, Dan Penn,
performed by James
Purify, Bobby Purify;
"Bachata Rosa",
"Senorita" by Juan Luis
Guerra, performed by
Juan Luis Guerra y 440;
"Zapa mambo" by and
performed by Banda
Machos
Choreography
Miguel Delgado
Supervising Sound Editor
Marian Wilde
Sound Mixer
José Araujo
Sound Re-recordists
Tom Johnson
Samuel Lehmer
Stunt Co-ordinator
Rick Baker
Cast
Jimmy Smits
Jimmy Sanchez
Edward James Olmos
Pacos
Esai Morales
Chucho

Eduardo Lopez Rojas
José Sanchez
Elpidia Carrillo
Isabel Magaña
Jenny Gago
Maria Sanchez
Enrique Castillo
Memo "Bill" Sanchez
Rafael Cortes
Roberto
Ivette Reina
Trini
Amelia Zapata
Roberto's Girlfriend
Jacob Vargas
Young José
Emilio del Naro
Abel Woolrich
Ox Cart Drivers
Leon Singer
El Californio
Rosalee Mayeux
Maria's Employer
Jennifer Lopez
Young Maria
Alicia del Lago
Maria's Aunt
Thomas Rosales
Boatman
Anthony Gonzalez
Baby Paco
Cassandra Campos
Baby Irene
Michael Gonzalez
Little Paco
Susanna Campos
Little Irene
Constance Marie
Toni
Benito Martinez
Young Paco
Greg Albert
Young Memo
Maria Canals
Young Irene
Jonathan Hernandez
Young Jimmy
Cris Franco
Young Gerardo
Salvador Hernandez
Samuel Hernandez
Juan Jimenez
Jesus Alberto Guzman
José Mario Rodriguez
Arturo Palacios
Mariachi
Michael Delorenzo
Butch Mejia
Valente Rodriguez
Eddie Ayala
Chucho's Friends
Romeo René Fabi-n
Eddie
Bel Hernandez
Eddie's Mom

Jeanette Jurado
Rosie
David Salas
Bill Mondragon
Eric Mondragon
Dennis Jimenez
Alex Tanasi
The Originals
Seldy Lopez
Lena, Chucho's
Girlfriend
George Lopez Jr
Moses Saldana
Ballplayers
Brian Lally
Officer
Ernie Lively
Sergeant
Bart Johnson
Young Officer
Peter Mark Vasquez
Prison Guard
Scott Bakula
David Ronconi
Lupé Ontiveros
Irene Sanchez
Ruben Sierra
Gerardo
Mary Steenburg
Gloria
Willie C. Carpenter
I. N. S. Guard
Delana Michaels
Judge
Pete Leal
Old Man On Balcony
Valerie Wildman
Sunny, Gloria's Friend
Michael Tomlinson
Dr McNally
Saachiko
Nurse
Emilio Rivera
Tamalito
Paul Robert Langdon
Carlitos
Angelina Estrada
Woman with Groceries
Dedee Pfeiffer
Karen Gillespie
Bibi Besch
Mrs Gillespie
Bruce Gray
Mr Gillespie
11,362 feet
126 minutes
Dolby stereo
In colour
Technicolor
Partly Subtitled



Estranged in paradise: Jimmy Smits, Paul Robert Langdon

armed robbery. Through the intervention of his social activist sister Toni, he becomes the reluctant partner in an arranged marriage to keep a young immigrant woman, Isabel, from deportation. They eventually fall in love, but when Isabel dies during childbirth an enraged Jimmy estranges himself from his son, Carlitos. After time in prison, he returns for a reconciliation with his five-year-old boy. Carlitos continually rejects him until Jimmy decides despairingly that he has to leave. It is at this point that his son accepts him, and the two are able to cement their relationship.

Gregory Nava, the director of *El Norte*, originally envisaged this epic Latino family saga as full of "colour and life like a novel by Márquez". While the photography is stunning – conveying warm, honey-coloured light in the opening village scenes, the vibrancy of the 50s wedding, the gritty heat of 80s streets – there is little of the seductive surrealism that marks out say, Alphonso Arau's *Like Water For Chocolate*. Nava's only nods towards Magic Realism are when the young Sanchez gazes up at a shiny cloud with his new bride and finds an angel, and a large owl that appears every so often as an inconvenient omen of death.

Spanning three generations, the story is a simple study of the squishy heart of 'La Familia', narrated in a Mexican John Boy Walton style by the eldest living son Paco, an aspiring writer played by Edward James Olmos. Although three decades are covered – the 20s, 50s and 80s – there is little sense of the complexities of American immigrant experience. The first period, for instance, which begins with subtleties, charts with a mawkish sincerity Sanchez's slow struggle for his family's survival in the new Los Angeles.

There is a bewildering change of pace when the film leaps into the 50s and a full-blown Mexican-American wedding. Again, it is beautifully shot, with memorable images such as a long line of sparkling Chevys. But the characters lapse into parody: there is Esai Morales' hot youngblood Chucho, facing up to the leader of a local gang with his knives and "macho bullshit"; Eduardo Lopez Rojas' sentimental patriarch,

gathering the *familia* together for a group photograph and suppressing a sob of pride; and Constance Marie's Toni, the typically fiery Chicano daughter who bursts into tears when she catches the bride's bouquet. "Whatever's the matter?" asks her long-suffering mother. "I will never marry," she says amid the mayhem. She is going to be a nun. "She will be marrying Jesus!", cries mother Maria victoriously.

Soon after the family celebrate Toni's entry into the sisterhood, her brother Chucho battles it out on the dance floor, *West Side Story*-style. His violent death at the hands of trigger-happy Los Angeles police could have been used to underscore the tensions that destabilised the Latino community, but instead it is explained away as the revenge of the barn owl, the evil spirit who nearly claimed him as a baby.

When the film moves into the 80s, the mood changes again with the overlay of slightly more sophisticated political grit. By now Toni has left the holy order to marry an ex-priest and become a somewhat implausible social activist, urging her younger brother Jimmy (played by Jimmy Smits of *NYPD Blue* and *LA Law* fame) to "use the system to fuck the system." With his deftly-cut sideburns and burning biceps Smits is easy on the eye but wooden in performance. The pace flags as first Toni and then his determined young wife (gushingly over-played by Elpidia Carrillo) try to break his impenetrable lone wolf pose.

It's not until the final scenes that the drama begins to bite, first with a comic edge when successful lawyer brother Memo brings his WASP fiancée and her parents home – a wonderfully observed cultural clash between the two families. There is also soulful pathos in the way Jimmy finally wins over his estranged son, the conflict between them slipping beyond stereotype into a heart-wrenching exploration of love, loss and trust. These moments, however, are not enough to give this film the substance it badly needs. While Jimmy is glibly written off by the narrator as "the family fuck-up who carried the shit for the rest of us," Ma and Pa sit at the kitchen table reflecting on their lives in a manner reminiscent of a coffee commercial. *The Godfather* this ain't.

Lucy O'Brien

The Neon Bible

United Kingdom 1995

Director: Terence Davies

Certificate
15
Distributor
Artificial Eye/Mayfair
Production Company
Scala Production For
Film 4 International/
Channel 4 Films
Developed with the
support of the
European Script Fund
An initiative by the
MEDIA Programme of
the European Union
Executive Producers
Nik Powell
Stephen Woolley

Producers
Elizabeth Karlsen
Olivia Stewart
Line Producer
Victoria Westhead
Production Co-ordinators
Melanie Bell
Wendy Broom
Unit Production Manager
Teresa M. Yarbrough
Location Manager
Jonathan Karlsen
Assistant Directors
Cas Donovan
Amy Schmidt
Rich Greenberg
Thomas D. Coe
Script Supervisor
Amy Blanc

Casting
Laura Rosenthal
Screenplay
Terence Davies
Based on the novel by
John Kennedy Toole
Director of Photography
Mick Coulter
2nd Unit Director
of Photography
Howard Bashew
Camera Operator
Robin Brown
Editor
Charles Rees
Production Designer
Christopher Hobbs
Art Director
Phil Messina
Set Decorator
Kristin Messina
Set Dressers
Thomas (Pete) Ellis
Gary Bannister
Alice Nisbet
Additional:
Gerald F. D'Alessio
Marshall Davis

Scenic Artist
Larry Shepard
Special Effects Co-ordinator
Lisa Reynolds
Costume Design
Monica Howe
Wardrobe Supervisor
Kathy Heiner
Make-up Artists
Sarah Mays
Additional:
Heather Prichard
Hairstylists
Rita Parillo
Additional:
Heather Prichard
Music Arrangements
Robert Lockhart
Songs/Music Extracts
"Perfidia" by Alberto
Dorlinguez, performed
by Glenn Miller;
"Oh Lord How Long"
performed by
Jane Marshall;
"How Long Has This
Been Goin' On" by

George Gershwin,
Ira Gershwin, "My
Romance" by Richard
Rodgers, Lorenz Hart,
performed by Gena
Rowlands; "Going
Home" by Anton
Dvorak, "Chattanooga
Choo Choo" by Harry
Warren, Mack Gordon,
"Dixie" by Daniel
Decatur Emmett,
"The Old Rugged Cross"
performed by The Cast;
"David O. Selznick
Insignia Tune" by
Alfred Newman,
"Tara's Theme" by Max
Steiner, performed by
Selznick International
Orchestra; "Too-ra-loo-
ra-loo-ral" by J. R.
Shannon, performed
by Diana Scarwid;
"Hard Times Come
Again No More"
performed by Stephen Foster,
performed by Thomas
Hampson
Choreography
Renee Victor
Sound Editors
Zane Hayward
Pat O'Neill
Sound Mixer
Thomas Varga
Stunt Co-ordinator
Lonnie Smith
Animal Trainer
Senia Phillips

Cast
Gena Rowlands
Aunt Mae
Diana Scarwid
Sarah
Denis Leary
Frank
Jacob Tierney
David, age 15
Leo Burmester
Bobbie Lee Taylor
Frances Conroy
Miss Scover
Peter McRobbie
Reverend Watkins
Joan Glover
Flora
Bob Hannah
George
Tom Turbville
Clyde
Drake Bell
David, age 10
Dana Dick
Jo Lynne
Virgil Graham Hopkins
Mr Williams
Jill Jane Clements
Woman
Aaron Frisch
Bruce
Sharon Blackwood
Mrs Watkins
Charlie Franzen
Tannoy
Sherry Velvet
Stephanie Astalos Jones
Testifiers
Ian Shearer
Billy Sunday Thompson
Duncan Stewart
Head Boy

8,267 feet
91 minutes

Dolby stereo
In colour
Eastman
Anamorphic

In the early 1920s teenager Jose Sanchez leaves his remote village in Mexico in search of his last living relative, an old man in far-away Los Angeles. After a long journey on foot Sanchez reaches the city, finds the cantankerous El Californio, one of the original California settlers, and stays. While working as a gardener in Beverly Hills he meets his future wife, a housekeeper named Maria. By the 30s they are happily married with two children, but when pregnant with her third, Maria is picked up during an anti-immigration sweep and deported to Mexico. It is two years before she makes the dangerous journey back with her baby son, and the family are reunited.

In the 50s, Chucho has grown up to become a rebellious young man, caught between American cultural values and his Mexican heritage. After his sister's wedding, Chucho becomes involved in a dance hall fight and accidentally kills a man. Hunted down by the police, he is shot dead in front of his younger brother Jimmy. By the 80s Jimmy emerges as a withdrawn and troubled soul, fresh out of jail for

● A train winds its way through the night-time countryside. On it a teenage boy rides, remembering what has happened to him....

Growing up in a small bible belt town in a valley deep in the South, young David is a sensitive and isolated child. His father Frank is a restless and sometimes violent presence, whose inability to provide a living for his family makes him ever more unpredictable. Frank takes David to a Klu Klux Klan lynching. He also forces him to play with other boys who bully him. At the age of ten, the impoverished circumstances of David's life are mitigated by the arrival of his mother's sister, Aunt Mae, a venerable but still glamorous nightclub singer, who scandalises the tight-knit community with her risqué behaviour.

The Second World War breaks out and Frank goes off to fight. The women go to work in the factory, where Mae leads singing and dancing to general approbation. However, the religious revivalism of visiting preacher Bobbie Lee Taylor presents a sterner model of communal interaction. The war ends, Frank is killed and returns home in a casket. David's mother Sarah starts to lose her already tenuous grip on reality. David leaves school and starts work in the local drugstore. He does well under the kindly supervision of the shop's owner, managing to escape the predatory intentions of local housewives and to even catch the eye of a pretty young visitor to the valley.

However, when Aunt Mae hooks up with a musician and leaves town to reactivate her singing career, David – determined not to let his ever more deranged mother be taken away to an asylum – is forced to give up his job in order to look after her. Sarah kills herself and David's grieving over her body is disturbed by the arrival of a man intending to take her to the asylum. Confused and desperate, David kills him, buries his mother's body himself, and with money given to him by the owner of the drugstore, he buys a train ticket and rides away from town.

● If John Kennedy Toole had lived to see his teenage novel reach the cinema screen before his grown-up masterwork *A Confederacy of Dunces* (last heard of still being adapted by a pre-retirement Stephen Fry), he would probably die of shock. *The Neon Bible* was written in secret when Kennedy Toole was 16, and it became the subject of an extended legal battle after his other book won a posthumous Pulitzer Prize, because his mother didn't want it published (it finally came out in 1987). It is a strange and haunting novel, and this is a strange and haunting film, though not always for the same reasons.

That it should have been made by Terence Davies initially comes as something of a surprise – his previous films are largely autobiographical, and it's a long way from Liverpool to Georgia – but the more you think about it, the more sense it makes. The book has several themes in common with Davies' previous work: the intoxicating

influence of women on male upbringings, the destructive potential of religion and the nature of memory all loom large here. The Second World War and its aftermath are also familiar settings for Davies. Furthermore, just as *The Neon Bible* is always read through a filter of what was to follow in Kennedy Toole's life, so the film will be watched through Davies' earlier evocations of childhood in *Distant Voices*, *Still Lives* and *The Long Day Closes*.

Most importantly of all, the novel's sense of enclosure – evoked both through its setting and the teenage narrator's style – is so profound that perhaps only a cultural outsider could put it on the screen. The intriguing possibility presents itself of a film whose reminiscing protagonist, creative originator and writer-director are all equally intermingled presences. Unfortunately this is not quite how things turn out.

The problem lies in the writing, or more properly the re-writing. Davies has observed that on reading the novel he "knew exactly where to put the camera". It's a shame he didn't begin making the film he envisioned without messing around with the book. The most important and destructive change he makes in the story's emphasis is in bringing forward the character of Sarah, David's mother. What makes the novel's portrayal of maternal instability so compelling is its restraint, yet Davies obliges Diana Scarwid to turn in a performance of such baroque carpet-chewing intensity it makes Liv Ullman seem a mistress of understatement. The scene in which she claws at the fly screen singing 'Too-ra-loo-ra-loo-ra' will be an uneasy mixture of the unbearable and the hilarious even to those who have not seen Steve Martin's bravura rendition of the same song in *Housesitter*. Perhaps Davies' film would have been improved by acquaintance with this recent Hollywood romantic comedy. For a man justly renowned for his grasp of the emotive power of popular song and the enduring power of his imagery, Davies demonstrates here a shocking disregard for the protocol of popular cinema: he doesn't seem to realise that the emotional hyperbole of this scene had already been satirised before it was shot.

There are moments of great beauty – one scene of orders of service being used as fans by the crowd in the suffocating atmosphere of a religious revival meeting has extraordinary resonance. Gena Rowlands gives Aunt Mae just the right amount of faded glamour, and Denis Leary puts in an impeccable performance in the all too brief role as the tortured-redneck father, but there is a vacuum where this film's heart ought to be. The elder (and longer on screen) of the two young actors playing David is just too weak and passive a presence around which to build a film. Ultimately, Davies crosses the line that separates the painterly from the tedious once too often. The uncomfortable truth is he has turned an uplifting book into a depressing film.

Ben Thompson

The Net

USA 1995

Director: Irwin Winkler

Certificate

12

Distributor

Columbia TriStar
Production Company
Columbia Pictures

Producers

Irwin Winkler
Rob Cowan
Production Co-ordinator
Lois Walker

Unit Production Manager

Brian Frankish

Location Managers

Steve Dayan

San Francisco: Ellen Winchell

2nd Unit Director

Buddy Van Horn

Assistant Directors

J. Michael Haynie

Kate Davey

Lisa C. Satriano

San Francisco: Shannon M. Wilson

Script Supervisor

Trudy Ramirez

Casting

Mindy Marin

Associate: John Papsidera

Voice: L.A. MadDogs

Screenplay

John Brancato

Michael Ferris

Director of Photography

Jack N. Green

2nd Unit Director of Photography

Mark Vargo

Camera Operators

Chris Squires

Philip D. Schwartz

Steadicam Operator

Chris Squires

Plane Crash Sequence

Sony Pictures

Imageworks:

Visual Effects

Supervisor/Director of VFX Photography:

David Drzewiecki

Visual Effects Producer:

Suzanne Pastor

Computer Graphics

Supervisor:

Kelly Ray

Model Tower

Fabrication:

Prop'r Effects Inc

Model Plane

Fabrication:

Larry Jolly Miniatures

Camera Department

Head:

Marcus Kraus

Digital Production

Department Head:

Jim Houston

Executive Producer:

George Merkert

Computer Display Graphics

Mann Consulting,

San Francisco

Editor

Richard Halsey

Production Designer

Dennis Washington

Art Director

Tom Targownik

Set Design

Ann Harris

Set Decorator

Anne D. McCulley

Special Effects Supervisors

Dale L. Martin

Leo Leoncio Solis

Special Effects

Co-ordinators

Joe Quinlivan

Frank W. Schepler

Costume Design

Linda Bass

Costume Supervisor

Deahdra T. Scarano

Make-up Supervisor

Pamela Westmore

Key Hairstylist

Vivian McAteer

Title Design

Robert Dawson

Titles/Opticals

Cinema Research

Corporation

Music

Mark Isham

Music Editors

Will Kaplan

Tom Carlson

Music Consultant

Jeffrey Pollack

Songs/Music Extracts

"A Whiter Shade of

Pale" by Keith Reid,

Gary Brooker,

performed by Annie

Lennox; "Moon River"

by Henry Mancini,

Johnny Mercer; "Blanca

Rosa" by Alfredo Lopez

Supervising Sound Editor

Michael O'Farrell

Sound Editors

Brian Berdan

Additional:

Marcelo Sansevieri

Dialogue Editors

David Williams

J. H. Arrufat

Stoffan Falesitch

Supervising ADR Editor

David Giammarco

Supervising Foley Editor

Jonathan Klein

ADR Editor

Joan Giammarco

Chris Flick

Don Sylvester

Julie Feiner

Production Mixer

Richard Lightstone

Foley Mixer

Jim Ashwill

Foley Recordist

Nesnes Gezalyan

Sound Re-recording Mixers

Rick Kline

Kevin O'Connell

Sound Effects Editors

Paul Berolzheimer

David Van Slyke

Mark A. Lanza

Foley Artists

Dan O'Connell

John Cucci

Gary Hecker

Computer Consultants

Todd Aron Marks

Additional:

Alex Mann

Harold Mann

Stunt Co-ordinator

Buddy Van Horn

Cast

Sandra Bullock

Angela Bennett

Jeremy Northam

Jack Devlin

Dennis Miller

Dr Alan Champion

Diane Baker

Mrs Bennett

Wendy Gazelle

Imposter

Ken Howard

Bergstrom

Ray McKinnon

Dale

Daniel Schorr

WNN Anchor

L. Scott Caldwell

Public Defender

Robert Gossett

Ben Phillips

Kristina Kroft

Julia Pearlstein

Nurses

Juan Garcia

Resort Desk Clerk

Tony Perez

Mexican Doctor

Margo Winkler

Mrs Raines

Gene Kirkwood
Stan Whiteman
Christopher Barga
Charles Winkler
Cops
Rick Snyder
Russ Melbourne
Gerald Berns
Jeff Gregg
Tannis Benedict
Elevator Woman
Vaughn Armstrong
Wren T. Brown
Troopers
Lynn Blades
Remote Reporter
Israell Juarbe
Thief
Julia Vera
Mexican Nun
Lewis Dix
FedEx Man
Lili Flanders
Embassy Worker
Adam Winkler
Computer Nerd
Brian Frankish
Shuttle Driver
Wanda Lee Evans
Desk Sergeant
David Winkler
Computer Technician
Kerry Kilbride
WNN Reporter
Roland Gomez
Limo Driver
Melvin Thompson
Fire Official

Rich Bracco
Fireman
Lucy Butler
Female Officer
John Livingston
Cam Brainard
Computer Technicians
Dennis Richmond
Elaine Corral Kendall
Newscasters
Alfredo Lopez
Guitar Player
Thomas Crawford
Waiter
John Cappon
ICU Doctor
Barbara Abedi
CCU Nurse
Kevin Brown
The Bunny
Hope Parrish
William B. Hill
Security Officers
Danny Breen
Supervisor
Andrew Amador
Dermot Conley
Melissa Bomes
Reservation Clerk

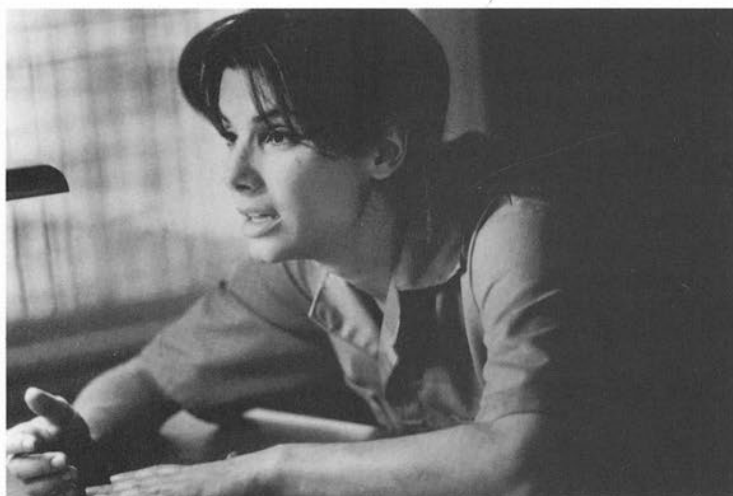
10,311 feet
115 minutes

Dolby stereo
In colour
Technicolor

● Computer wizard Angela Bennett lives a reclusive life in Southern California, where she hunts for viruses in computer programmes. She doesn't really seem to know anyone except her mother, who suffers from Alzheimer's disease and doesn't recognise Angela as her own daughter.

Angela receives a strange piece of software from Cathedral, the company she works for. Even though she is about to go on vacation to Mexico, she agrees to meet her boss Dale to go over the disc. On his way to meet her, Dale's plane crashes because of a mysterious computer instrument malfunction. Nevertheless, Angela goes to Mexico where she meets handsome Jack Devlin, who seems to have a lot in common with her. When a local steals Angela's bag, we discover that Devlin is an assassin, his knowledge of her garnered from computer databases. Discovering his gun, Angela knocks him unconscious, then she too is knocked out in a boating accident.

After three days in a Mexican hospital, Angela gets back to her hotel to find that she has already been checked out. When she applies for temporary papers so she can get back to the US, they come back with another name, Ruth Marks, on them. On returning to LA, she finds that her car is missing, her house has been emptied and put up for sale, and that the police believe she's a criminal. She can't find anyone who can identify her, gets busted, and is helped out of jail by a seemingly friendly but actually fraudulent FBI agent. She turns to her ex-therapist/boyfriend Dr Alan Champion for help. He gets her to a hotel room and a laptop, and she discovers that there is a massive conspiracy involving a software mogul and a gang of renegade hackers, the Praetorians, who are selling a data protection programme with a hidden flaw that enables them to manipulate every system that ►



Nerd on the wire: Sandra Bullock

◀ installs it.

Champion succumbs to an altered medical prescription and dies. Angela eludes Devlin for the second time and infiltrates Cathedral Software where her identity has been taken by a Praetorian imposter (the real Ruth Marks). There she gets to the heart of the conspiracy and later, at a computer trade fair, she gets back on-line and destroys the Praetorian database with a favourite virus. Devlin shoots Marks by mistake and in a final struggle he falls to his death.

Irwin Winkler is an honoured producer, with a Best Picture Oscar for *Rocky* and enormous prestige for producing several of Martin Scorsese's best films. Unfortunately, what he really wants is to direct, and he has the clout to do it. So he has foisted a trio of exceedingly mediocre films upon an unsuspecting public: *Guilty By Suspicion*, *Night and the City* and now *The Net*. *Guilty By Suspicion* was dull and *Night and the City* had the unexpected effect of making Jules Dassin's original film (on which Winkler's film was only loosely based) look like a masterpiece, but at least they were coherent. *The Net* simply doesn't make sense.

Supposedly, the renegade hackers can get into any database in the world and change the data. This is fine if you believe that one can access police data banks through the Internet. (You can't.) What this film neglects to consider is that anyone who has owned a computer for any length of time has had at least one major system crash and the bigger the system the more likely it is to crash, so that anyone who owns a large database has backups for their backups. Supposedly, Jeremy Northam's Jack Devlin is a cold-blooded professional killer. Why then is he defeated at every turn by Angela Bennett, a computer geek whose idea of a big evening is ordering a pizza and chatting on the Internet?

The Net also violates basic thriller rules, particularly the one that demands that the hero must confront and defeat the villain. Angela never even meets the big villain, choosing instead to dispose of his henchman. This is like making a James Bond movie in which Bond never gets to meet

Goldfinger. Winkler has no real eye. He has a decent cinematographer and the film looks competent – and at the price of Hollywood movies today it ought to – but it seems that no thought has been given to how the film should function as a coherent visual entity.

Winkler and company have devoted millions of dollars worth of technology and a few thousand man-hours to create a neo-Luddite thriller that resembles a cross between *Sneakers* and *Three Days of the Condor*. It spends its 100 minutes or so showing us all the cool things one can supposedly do with technology and then denounces that technology as dehumanising. With all the talk about the new computer-oriented and virtual reality films – *The Net*, *Virtuosity Hackers* – we seem to have been here before. In Hollywood terms this is old news. *Wargames* warned us about the dangers of rampant computer technology more than a decade ago, as did Donald Cammell's *Demon Seed*, and the great virtual reality movie, Douglas Trumbull's *Brainstorm*, is almost 15 years old.

The Net is an old-fashioned woman-in-distress thriller with cyberpunk trappings and a nod to contemporary feminism – Sandra Bullock's Angela gets to brain the villain with a fire extinguisher instead of waiting for a man to come along and shoot him, but its trappings dress up a mentality that comes from the horse and carriage era. In its favour, *The Net* offers another charming Sandra Bullock performance. (Is it just me or does she bear an uncanny resemblance to the Gelfings, the little humanoid pixies in Jim Henson's *The Dark Crystal*?) It also gets some comic juice from Dennis Miller as her ex-boyfriend. Miller is turning into the male Rosie O'Donnell, showing up for a few scenes, goosing the picture into life, and then leaving.

The Net is the work of a print-era intelligence rejecting the evolutionary future, fearing that if everyone has a computer people who can write software will control the known universe. People expressed similar fears about the introduction of the automobile, but people who can fix the transmission on a Buick have yet to achieve lasting political power.

John Harkness

Nine Months

USA 1995

Director: Chris Columbus

Certificate

tbc

Distributor

20th Century Fox
Production Company
20th Century Fox
present
A 1492 production
Executive Producers
Joan Bradshaw
Christopher Lambert

Producers

Anne François
Chris Columbus
Mark Radcliffe
Michael Barnathan

Associate Producer

Paula DuPre' Pesmen

Production Supervisors

Jacqueline A. Shea
Cannon Creations:
Keith Vanderlaan

Production Co-ordinator

Mary Duann-Kelly

Unit Production Manager

Joan Bradshaw

Location Managers

Bruce Devan

Associate:

Debra Girard

Assistant Directors

Geoff Hansen

Gabriela Vázquez

Eric Tignini

Annie Spiegelman

Script Supervisor

Carol De Pasquale

Casting

Janet Hirshenson

Jane Jenkins

Associate:

Amy McIntyre

Screenplay

Chris Columbus

Based on the film *Neuf*

mois (1994) by Patrick

Braoudé

Director of Photography

Donald McAlpine

Camera Operators

Douglas Ryan

Kim Marks

Steadicam Operator

David Luckenbach

Editor

Raja Gosnell

Production Designer

Angelo P. Graham

Art Director

W. Steven Graham

Set Design

Richard Berger

Steve Saklad

Set Decorator

Garrett Lewis

Scenic Artists

Jay Fisher

Jennifer Clinard

Sculptures

Joan Frenkel

Cannon Creations:

Glen Hanz

Motoyoshi Hata

Special Effects Co-ordinator

John McLeod

Praying Mantis/UltraSound

Video Imaging

Western Images

Costume Design

Jay Hurley

Costume Supervisors

Mickey Antonetti

Andrea Weaver

Key Make-up Artist

Bob Mills

Special Make-up

Greg Cannon

Key Hairstylist

Bonnie Clevering

Title Design

Nina Saxon

Film Design

Titles/Opticals

Pacific Title

Music

Hans Zimmer

Music Performed by

Clarinet Solo:

Jim Kanter

Piano Solo:

Ralph Grierson

Orchestrations

Bruce Fowler

Ladd McIntosh

Music Editor

Adam Smalley

Songs

"The Time of Your Life"

by Steven Van Zandt,

performed by Little

Steven; "These Are

the Days" by and

performed by Van

Morrison; "Let's Get

It On" by Marvin Gaye,

Ed Townsend,

performed by Marvin

Gaye; "Baby, I Love

You" by Phil Spector,

Ellie Greenwich, Jeff

Barry, performed by

The Ronettes; "Turn

Back the Hands of

Time" by Bonnie

F. Thompson, Jack

Daniels, performed

by Tyrone Davis; "19th

Nervous Breakdown"

by Mick Jagger, Keith

Richards, performed by

The Rolling Stones

Sound Design

Randy Thom

Supervising Sound Editor

Robert Shoup

Dialogue Editors

Michael Silvers

Sara Bolder

Clare C. Freeman

ADR Editors

Suzanne Fox

Marilyn McCoppen

Foley Editors

Sandina Bailo-Lape

Mary Helen Leasman

Bruce Lacey

Sound Mixer

Nelson Stoll

Sound Recordist

Scott Kinzey

ADR Recordist

Jeff Kilment

Foley Recordist

Tony Eckert

Music Mixer

Jay Rifkin

Sound Re-recording Mixers

Tom Johnson

Lora Hirschberg

Sound Effects Editor

Ethan Van der Ryn

Foley Artists

Dennie Thorpe

Tom Barwick

Medical Advisors

Sarah J. Kilpatrick

Carl Otto

Barbara Silver

Julie Simon

Stunt Co-ordinator

Glenn R. Wilder

Cast

Hugh Grant

Samuel Faulkner

Julianne Moore

Rebecca Taylor

Tom Arnold

Marty Dwyer

Joan Cusack

Gail Dwyer

Jeff Goldblum

Sean Fletcher

Robin Williams

Dr Kosevich

Mia Cottet

Lili

Joey Simmrin

Truman

Ashley Johnson

Shannon Dwyer

Alexa Vega

Molly Dwyer

Aislin Roche

Patsy Dwyer

Priscilla Alden

Older Woman

Edward Ivory

Older Man

James M. Brady

Bicyclist

Charles A. Martinet

Arnie

Brendan Columbus

Little Boy on Beach

Eleanor Columbus

Anna Barnathan

Zelda Williams

Little Girls in

Ballet Class

Peter Bankins

Tow Truck Driver

Betsy Monroe

Bobbie

Ngaio S. Bealun

Cynthia Urquhart

Tim Moffet

Mia Liban

Kumar Singh

Sean's Friends

Amanda Girard

Praying Mantis

Val Diamond

Dr Kosevich's

Receptionist

Jerry Masan

Clown Outside

Toy Store

Irene Columbus

Woman in Toy Store

Violet Columbus

Baby in Toy Store

Brittany Radcliffe

Porscha Radcliffe

Cody Lee Dorkin

Emily Gosnell

Bradley Gosnell

Children at Toy Store

Kristin Davis

Tennis Attendant

Angela Hopkins

Ultrasound

Receptionist

Emily Yancy

Dr Thatcher

English child psychologist

Samuel Faulkner has lived happily in San Francisco with his girlfriend Rebecca for five years but recoils from commitment. When Rebecca announces that she is pregnant, he is so shocked he crashes his Porsche. He visits his friend Sean, who shows no regrets that his partner Christine has just left him because he refused to start a family. Sean's sister Gail and her husband Marty arrive with their three intrusive daughters, intensifying Samuel's horror.

Samuel plans to tell Rebecca she must end the pregnancy, but loses his nerve. After a hospital check-up with Dr Kosevich, a newly arrived Russian émigré obstetrician, Samuel persuades Rebecca to keep her pregnancy quiet, but their secret is revealed when they are spotted by Gail and Marty who are attending a check-up for an expected fourth child. Rebecca tells Gail she is unhappy about Samuel's negative attitude to their baby. Sean admits to Samuel that losing Christine and the chance of fatherhood have left his life empty, and tells Samuel not to make his mistake.

Too late to share Rebecca's first ultrasound appointment, Samuel is moved to hear that the child is a boy and healthy. Warned by the doctor that Rebecca is upset and needs his support, he arrives home contrite to find her packing. Alone with the ultrasound video of his son, he cries. Eventually, Samuel apologises to Rebecca for his selfishness and she accepts his offer of marriage.

Hayley Rose Hansen

Baby in Ultrasound

Shawn Cady

Roller Blade Girl

George F. Mauricio

Moving Man

Paul Simon

Car Salesman

Frank P. Verducci

Barbara Olson

Car Lot Customers

Morgan Miller

Kid Being Choked

in Park

Carol De Pasquale

Maternity Floor

Receptionist

Bruce Devan

Rebecca goes into labour. The couple are horrified to find Dr Kosevich in charge and have to share a delivery room with Gail and Marty. In the ensuing chaos, Marty is disappointed to acquire a fourth daughter, and Samuel is overwhelmed to see his new son.

Just before *Nine Months'* US release back in July a rumour drifted across the Atlantic that the 'disgraced' Englishman's \$35 million big studio debut was, according to one source, "the worst movie to come out of Hollywood since *9½ Weeks*". Sadly, *Nine Months* isn't even that interesting. If it weren't for the Lewd Hugh factor, this would just be another routine Chris Columbus comedy – except that this time the cynicism about conventional family set-ups which gave Columbus' *Mrs Doubtfire* and *Home Alone* their edge has been unconvincingly papered over in the name of saccharine pro-family propaganda.

That motherhood and marriage are the only 'natural' outcomes for Rebecca is never really in doubt. In case we miss the message, Rebecca tells Gail "I know it's fashionable to be a strong single mother, but I want this baby to have a mother and a father." What Senator Robert Dole – the Republican leader – will make of *Nine Months* is a mystery. Coherently coupling as it does coy sex with self-consciously explicit language, and girlie sentiment with 'comic' male violence; it comes across as a self-defeating shotgun wedding of high concepts, tacked together by committee in the desperate hope that slinging in something for everyone will please someone somewhere.

The success of *Four Weddings and a Funeral* had much to do with its makers' freedom to by-pass this kind of corporate bad faith. By contrast, the executives who control *Nine Months* and its star's image really need not have bothered. They removed a sequence in which Grant gets arrested for breaking a window to rescue his cat reputedly on the bizarre grounds that it would reduce his appeal for female audiences. No less likely to have the same negative effect are a scene in which he is accused of French kissing Tom Arnold while the latter is giving him mouth-to-mouth resuscitation and one where he repeatedly kicks a toy-store employee wearing a dinosaur suit in the head.

The oddest thing about watching *Nine Months* is noticing how uneasily Grant fits this formulaic comedy-romance. In *Four Weddings* his tongue-tied confusion, elaborate self-denigration and disastrous lack of tact were over-played but came off because they seemed real. In *Nine Months* the same traits, extravagant verbal nuances and facial tics are duplicated so closely that his performance comes across as self-conscious, insincere self-pastiche – an extension, in fact, of the same performance he has spent the past year perfecting in public. However, in the process his hypertrophied 'Englishness' has mutated into something nastier: his wit now comes across as arrogance, his self-bellittlement as a front for self-regard and his tactlessness as rudeness and even cruelty.

This performance might have provided an acerbic foil for the movie's sentimentality – but in a film which requires us to believe in his transformation into a dream husband and father it's a disaster. It's fitting that the film assigns more importance to an exchange of commodities than it does to a change of heart: Samuel's refusal to part with his two-seater Porsche is presented as definitive proof of his hostility to the future child, so his purchase of a family car and an engagement ring are deemed sufficient to silence any misgivings about the pairing.

In fact, the main thing Rebecca and Samuel seem to have in common is their shared xenophobic terror of Robin Williams' highly-strung Russian obstetrician, offensively portrayed as having earned his professional honours by practising on monkeys. If Williams is still the funniest person in the film, it's no thanks to a script which makes him mouth ancient malapropisms like "Now I'll take a look at your Volvo."

In a sad come-down from her famous pube-flashing in Robert Altman's *Short Cuts*, the talented Julianne Moore is here given the ignoble task of tempting Grant with the most sanitised cinematic strip-tease in living memory. But then *Nine Months'* idea of what women want is so impoverished that when Samuel carries his heavily pregnant bride over the threshold, her wedding-day treat proves to be a lavishly equipped, pastel-hued nursery.

Claire Monk

Pocahontas

USA 1995

Directors: Mike Gabriel/Eric Goldberg

Certificate

Distributor

Buena Vista

Production Company

Walt Disney Pictures

Producer

James Pentecost

Associate Producer

Baker Bloodworth

Production Managers

Traci Tolman Mars

Florida:

Don Walters

Senior Manager Production

Dana Axelrod

Post-production Supervisor

Deborah Edell

Underwood

Post-production

Co-ordinators

Jeanie Lynd Sorenson

Heather Jane

MacDonald-Smith

Post-production Manager

Sara Duran

Casting

Brian Chavanne

Ruth Lambert

Karen Margiotta

ADR Voice:

Barbara Harris

L.A. MadDogs

Screenplay

Carl Binder

Susannah Grant

Philip Lazebnik

Story

Glen Keane

Joe Grant

Ralph Zondag

Burny Mattinson

Ed Gombert

Kaan Kalyon

Francis Glebas

Robert Gibbs

Bruce Morris

Todd Kurosawa

Duncan Marjoribanks

Chris Buck

Based on an idea by

Mike Gabriel

Digitizing Camera

Supervisor

Robyn L. Roberts

Film Camera Manager

Joe Juliano

Digitizing Mark-up

Gina Worken

Florida:

Michael D. Lusby

Camera Operators

Digitizing:

David Braden

Lynette E. Cullen

Val D'Arcy

Gareth Fishbaugh

Corey Dean Fredrickson

Michael A. McFerrer

David J. Rowe

Florida:

Gary W. Smith

Barbara J. Poirier

Jason L. R. Buske

Animation:

John Aardal

Florida:

Andrew Simmons

Visual Effects Supervisors

Don Paul

Florida Unit:

Jeff Dutton

David Tidgwell

Visual Development/

Character Design

Vance Gerry

Mike Gabriel

Bruce Zick

Darek Gogol

Jean Gillmore

Duncan Marjoribanks

Will Finn

Joe Grant

Michael Gaiimo

Guy Deel

Ian Gooding

Glen Keane

Chris Buck

Kathy Zielinski

Digital Film Printing/

Optical Supervisor

Christopher W. Gee

Computer Graphics Imagery

Steve Goldberg

Artistic Supervisors

Layout:

Rasoul Azadani

Florida Unit:

Jeff Dickson

Background:

Cristy Maltese

Florida Unit:

Robert E. Stanton

Story:

Tom Sito

Clean-up:

Renee Holt-Bird

Nancy Kniep

Florida Unit:

Ruben Procopio

Supervising Animators

Pocahontas:

Glen Keane

John Smith:

John Pomeroy

Governor Ratcliffe:

Duncan Marjoribanks

Meeko:

Nik Ranieri

Powhatan:

Ruben A. Aquino

Thomas:

Ken Duncan

Percy/Grandmother

Willow/Wiggins:

Chris Buck

Ben/Lon:

T. Daniel Hofstedt

Flit/Forest Animals:

Dave Pruiksma

Nakoma:

Anthony DeRosa

Kocoum:

Michael Cedeno

Animators

Pocahontas:

Mark Henn

Randy Haycock

Tom Bancroft

Trey Finney

Doug Krohn

Brad Kuha

Gilda Palinginis

Ralf Palmer

Pres Antonio

Romanillos

Michael Show

Bob Bryan

Aaron Blaise

Ken Hettig

Tom Gately

John Ripa

Eric Walls

John Smith:

Joe Haidar

Ron Husband

David A. Zabolski

Gary J. Perkovic

William Recinos

Richard Bazley

Dave Kupczyk

Jean Morel

Michael Swofford

Bill Waldman

Philip Morris

Governor Ratcliffe:

Doug Frankel

Mark Koetsier

Teresa Martin

Chris Sauve

Ken Boyer

Meeko:

Brian Ferguson

Dave Kuhn

Raul Garcia

Steven P. Gordon

Powhatan:

James Young Jackson

Anthony Wayne

Michaels

Gregory S. Manwaring

Craig R. Maras

Thomas:

Chris Wahl

Percy:

Broose Johnson

Larry White

Grandmother Willow:

David Burgess

Wiggins:

James Lopez

Rejean Bourdages

Ben/Lon:

Barry Temple

Kent Hammerstrom

Nakoma:

Tim Allen

Kekata:

Geefwee Boedoe

English Settlers/Native

Americans:

D. Anthony

Wawrzaszek

Sasha Dorogov

Branko Mihanovic

Travis Blaise

Effects Animators

Dorise Lanpher

Ed Coffey

Garrett Wren

Ted C. Kiersey

Tom Hush

Stephen B. Moore

Kathleen Quaife Hodge

Marlon West

James De V. Mansfield

Allen Blyth

Troy A. Gustafson

Jazno Francoeur

3-D Effects

David A. Bossert

Stephen B. Moore

Daniel E. Wanket

Ed Coffey

Dan Chaika

Pre-production Effects

Development

David A. Bossert

Chris Jenkins

Scene Planning Supervisor

Ann Tucker

Animation Check

Supervisors

Janet Bruce

Florida:

Laurie A. Sacks

Colour Models Supervisor

Karen Comella

Ink and Paint Senior

Manager

Gretchen Maschmeyer

Albrecht

Ink and Paint Supervisor

Frances Kirsten

Paint/Final Check

Supervisor

Hortensia M. Casagran

Key Layout/Workbook

Daniel Hu

Allen Tam

Doug Walker

Mac George

Karen Keller

William H. Frake III

Tom Humber

Peter Bielicki

Background

Allison Belliveau-Proulx

Stephen Snow Owl
Bunch
Richard A. "Bear Coat"
Bercot
Music Arrangements
Songs:
Danny Troob
Martin Erskine
Vocals:
David Friedman
Orchestrations
Danny Troob
Executive Music Producer
Chris Montan
Music Producers
Alan Menken
Stephen Schwartz
Unit Producer
Jim "Great Elk" Waters
Supervising Music Editor
Kathleen Fogarty-
Bennett
Music Production
Supervisor
Tod Cooper
Songs
"Colors of the Wind"
performed by Vanessa
Williams; "If I Never
Knew You" performed
by Jon Secada, Shanice;
"The Virginia
Company" performed
by Chorus; "The
Virginia Company
(Reprise)" performed
by Mel Gibson, Chorus;
"Steady As the Beating
Drum" performed by
Chorus; "Steady as the
Beating Drum
(Reprise)" performed
by Jim Cummings;
"Just Around the
Riverbend", "Colors
of the Wind"
performed by Judy
Kuhn; "Listen With
Your Heart I, II, III"
performed by Linda
Hunt, Bobbi Page;
"Mine, Mine, Mine"
performed by David
Ogden Stiers, Mel
Gibson, Chorus;
"Savages (Part 1)"
performed by David
Ogden Stiers, Jim
Cummings, Chorus;
"Savages (Part 2)"
performed by David
Ogden Stiers, Jim
Cummings, Judy Kuhn,
Chorus; "Death Song"
by Hawk Pope
Choreography
D. J. Giagni
Supervising Sound Editors
Larry Kemp
Lon E. Bender
Dialogue Editors
Dan Rich
Chris Hogan

ADR Supervisor
Curt Schulkey
Foley Editors
Neal J. Anderson
Patrick N. Sellers
Sound Recordists
Doc Kane
Dubbing:
Jeanette Browning
Music Recordist/Mixer
John Richards
Sound Re-recording Mixers
Terry Porter
Mel Metcalfe
Dean A. Zupancic
Sound Effects Editors
Scott Martin Gershwin
Rick Morris
Alan Rankin
Joseph Phillips
Peter J. Lehman
Brian McPherson
Anthony J. Miceli
Foley Artists
John Roesch
Hilda Hodges
Native American Consultant
Shirley "Little Dove"
Custalow McGowan

Voices
Irene Bedard
Pocahontas
Judy Kuhn
Pocahontas' Singing
Voice
Mel Gibson
John Smith
David Ogden Stiers
Governor Ratcliffe/
Wiggins
John Kassir
Meeko
Russell Means
Powhatan
Christian Bale
Thomas
Linda Hunt
Grandmother Willow
Benny Mann
Percy
Billy Connolly
Ben
Joe Baker
Lon
Frank Welker
Flit
Michelle St John
Nakoma
James Apanam Fall
Kocoum
Gordon Tootoosis
Kekata

7.303 feet
81 minutes

Dolby stereo
In colour
Prints by
Technicolor

and dig fruitlessly for gold, Pocahontas and Smith meet by a waterfall and are soon conversing fluently with each other. When a member of the tribe is shot in a scuffle with the settlers, Powhatan decrees that no one should have contact with the white men, but Pocahontas and Smith, falling in love, continue to meet in secret.

Tensions escalate between the two groups, despite Pocahontas and Smith's pleas for peace. When Pocahontas' friend Nakoma tells Kocoum that Pocahontas is with Smith, he and Smith fight and Kocoum is shot by Ratcliffe's equerry Thomas. Smith is captured by the tribe and condemned to death, but Pocahontas insists they must kill her first. Powhatan is moved by this, and considers making peace with the settlers. When Ratcliffe tries to shoot Powhatan, Smith takes the bullet instead while attempting to save the chief. He recovers and the British put Ratcliffe under arrest and set off for home. Smith beseeches Pocahontas to come with him back to England, but she insists on staying behind with her people and the two sadly part company presumably forever.

There is something about the sheer scale of the success of Disney's animated films, breaking box-office records with the nonchalant regularity of a butcher snapping the necks of chickens, that raises the hackles of critics. Ever since the publication of the Dorfman and Mattelart's 1971 Marxist critique, *How to Read Donald Duck*, the Disney company has been constructed as an exemplar of capitalist cultural imperialism, permeating every nation on the earth with its seductive, easily translatable pop propaganda.

Dorfman and Mattelart were mainly concerned with the more disposable Donald Duck comic books, rather than the films. Yet, as the latter have grown in popularity and success and as "The Mouse" – as *Variety* likes to refer to the voracious rodent which is the Walt Disney Company proper – has grown to its global status, it has seemed ever more urgent to be vigilant of what subtextual messages might be contained within the cartoon texts. The Disney Version of stories is put under as much scrutiny as the testimony of policemen in Los Angeles courts. Thus, there were accusations of racism concerning *Aladdin* and *The Lion King*, and critics and academics have questioned the images of women portrayed in *Beauty and the Beast* and *The Little Mermaid*. It is as if we are holding the films responsible for much more than just entertaining children on a wet afternoon.

Pocahontas is fascinating because it bears witness to the company's attempt to grapple with these criticisms as well as to produce another record-breaking blockbuster that will soak up receipts as well in the midwest of America as that of Africa. Inevitably, it is fraught with contradictions and ironies. It is large and contains multitudes, as Walt Whitman said of himself; and like Whitman's poetry, it is baggy, drawing on a distinctly American vernacular



A whole new world: Pocahontas

(both verbal and visual), and full of moments of real poetry, sharp pathos and patronising kitsch.

Pocahontas is as politically correct as oatmeal cookies. Its heroine is tall, muscular and graceful, can steer rapids as well as Meryl Streep in *The River Wild*, and has a face so scrupulously uncaricatured she lacks cheekbones and any more nose than a pair of nostrils lest she be confused with her hook-nosed ancestors in cartoon history. All her expression resides in her eyes, as dewy and doe-eyed as Bambi's mother before she gets shot. The rest of the tribe are equally circumspectly drawn, while the white settlers range from exaggerated grotesques (baddies like Ratcliffe) to more realistic figures depending on how likeable they are. The film's world view constructs a great chain of being in which the Native Americans are poised at the pinnacle, neatly inverting Renaissance concepts of hierarchy.

The film-makers here seem acutely aware that they are dealing for the first time in a major way with 'true story', albeit one clouded in myth and predictably revised here. No matter how ersatz, the viewer is constantly aware of how historical details are being mobilised for verisimilitude. When Smith describes Pocahontas' people as "savages" in his accurately seventeenth-century way, her offence is assuaged by his explaining that it is "just a word". Indeed, a curious concern with language permeates the film, with the natives speaking an authentic North American dialect which quickly morphs into American-accented English. Much magical play is made of Smith and Pocahontas' immediate grasp of one another's languages, literalised in a kiss. One would almost imagine that the story-people had been brushing up on the linguist-philosopher Tzvetan Todorov's *The Conquest of America*, which posited that the Native Americans' apparent inability to understand Western language became the cornerstone of a whole discourse which explained their 'savagery'.

The anxiety of accuracy muddles much throughout the film. It showcases how much animation's motion-

control and background-generating technology has advanced. Character movements, especially Pocahontas' hair (tricky stuff to animate), are perfectly done, and some of the shots 'underwater' are nothing less than exquisite. However, the palette feels all wrong. The British scenes and characters are rendered in drab sepia colours so that the Native American setting, all bright and brutally blue skies, will seem all the nicer and friendlier. It would seem to me that a more muted natural palette would have been more appropriate to the latter culture, but I suppose the merchandisers, who favour a more garish, child-luring range of hues, had to be appeased.

The art direction alone belies the forces that threaten to tug *Pocahontas* apart: on the one hand, the natural world must be stylised, with faint native symbols accenting the wind sweeping the leaves to suggest the harmony of their culture with the environment; but on the other hand the film's commitment to corrective historicising and verisimilitude reigns in the exaggeration which is animation's stock-and-trade. As a solution the film resorts to the gestures of the epic – huge landscapes, swelling choruses, even split-screen effects at the climax which recall Abel Gance's *Napoléon*.

In the end, the film does get to you. It's Disney's darkest and most tragic animated film, even though it pulls back from telling the true historical ending – the real Pocahontas came back to England with Smith, died shortly after arriving and was buried in Gravesend. And though most children probably won't yet know it, they'll soon learn that this story with its 'happy' ending depicting a final concord between natives and settlers only begins a more chilling history concerning a genocide that would span centuries of horror. It's this 'front-story' which truly brings tears to the eyes when the credits roll, and by suggesting it, perhaps in a cloudy but well-meaning way, this film tries to expiate a little of the guilt that might be felt by one of the West's most successful capitalist organisations.

Leslie Felperin

London. 1607. Captain John Smith helms the ship taking Governor Ratcliffe of the Virginia Company to the New World where the latter hopes to found a colony and, more importantly, find gold.

The Native Americans living in the area the adventurers are bound for are led by Chief Powhatan, who wants his free-spirited daughter Pocahontas to marry Kocoum, the tribe's fiercest warrior. Pocahontas confides her troubles and her dreams to her friend, an ancient spirit which resides in a willow tree named Grandmother Willow. Pocahontas sees the ship arrive and the men claim the land for Britain. After briefly meeting Smith in the woods, she runs back to the tribe to report the arrival of the strangers. The tribal shaman sees visions of the white men as rapacious wolves who will eventually devour their people.

While the British establish their fort

Rudy

USA 1993

Director: David Anspaugh

Certificate

PG

Distributor

Columbia TriStar

Production Company

TriStar Pictures

Executive Producer

Lee R. Mayes

Producers

Robert N. Fried

Cary Woods

Co-producer

Angelo Pizzo

Associate Producers

Richard J. Zinman

Alan J. Mintz

Jeffrey I. Friedman

Production Co-ordinator

Charlene Norman

Cecchini

Unit Production Manager

Billy Higgins

Location Manager

Robert Hudgins

2nd Unit Director

Angelo Pizzo

Assistant Directors

Michael Waxman

Daniel M. Stillman

Sam Hoffman

Richard Muessel III

Script Supervisor

Alicia Accardo-Troller

Casting

Richard Pagano

Sharon Bialy

Debi Manwiller

Additional:

Jane Alderman

Screenplay

Angelo Pizzo

Director of Photography

Oliver Wood

Camera Operator

Gerrit Dangremond

Additional:

Phil Tuckett

Hank McElwee

Kyle C. Rudolph

Editor

David Rosenbloom

Production Designer

Robb Wilson King

Set Decorator

Martin Price

Storyboard Artist

Eric Ramsey

Special Effects Supervisor

Joey DiGaetano

Costume Design

Jane Anderson

Costume Supervisor

Rebecca Neddeau

Key Make-up Artist

Angela Nogaro

Key Hairstylist

Tammy Kusian

Titles

Sony Pictures

Imageworks

Opticals

Cinema Research

Corporation

Music

Jerry Goldsmith

Music Editor

Kenneth J. Hall

Songs/Music Extracts

"Notre Dame Victory

March" by John F. Shea,

Rev. Michael J. Shea,

"Hike, Notre Dame!"

by Vincent Fagan,

Joseph J. Casasanta,

performed by

University of Notre

Dame Glee Club; "Ring

of Fire" by Merle

Revival; "The Victory

Clog" by Robert F.

O'Brien; "Notre Dame

Victory March" by John

F. Shea, Rev. Michael J.

Shea, "Rakes of

Mallow" performed by

University of Notre

Dame Marching Band;

"When The Irish Backs

Go Marching By" by

Eugene Burke, Joseph J.

Casasanta; "Nittany

Lion" by James A.

Leyden; "Down The

Line" by Vincent Fagan,

Joseph J. Casasanta;

"The Spirited West"

Supervising Sound Editor

George H. Anderson

Dialogue Editors

David Williams

Clay Collins

Jim Matheny

Supervising ADR Editor

David Giammarco

Supervising Foley Editor

Jonathan Klein

ADR Editor

Kimberly Harris

Foley Editors

Brenda Sowa

Roy Seeger

Sound Mixer

Curt Frisk

Music Scoring Mixer

Bruce Botnick

Sound Re-recording Mixers

Sergio Reyes

Bill W. Benton

John J. Stephens

Sound Effects Editors

Mark Mangino

Chris Aud

Sanford Ponder

Steve Ticknor

Consultant

Daniel E. Ruettiger

Stunt Co-ordinator

Rick LeFevour

Football Co-ordinator

Allen Cowlings

Cast

Sean Astin

Rudy

Jon Favreau

D-Bob

Ned Beatty

Daniel

Greta Lind

Mary

Scott Benjaminson

Frank

Mary Ann Thebus

Betty

Charles S. Dutton

Fortune

Lili Taylor

Sherry

Christopher Reed

Pete

Deborah Wittenberg

Young Sherry

Christopher Erwin

Mark, age 7

Kevin Duda

Bernie, age 9

Robert Benirschke

Mark, age 11

Luke Massery

Rudy, age 13

Robert J. Steinmiller Jr

Pete, age 13

Jake Armstrong

Bernie, age 13

John Duda

Frank, age 15

Joey Sikora

Father James Riehle

Locker Room Priest

Robert Mohler

Johnny

Todd Spicer

Boy in Neighbourhood

Jason Miller

Ara Parseghian

Jean Plumbhoff

Fran

Spyridon Stratigos

Coach Gillespie

John Beasley

Coach Warren

Ron Dean

Coach Yonto

Paul Bergan

Coach

Lorenzo Clemons

Sean Grennan

High School Assistant

Coaches

John Whitmer

Football Trainer

Scott A. Boyd

William Bergan

Linemen

Kevin Thomas

Player from Sidelines

Tom Dennis

Announcer

Michael Sassone

Guard

Marie Anspaugh

Librarian

Chris Olson

Dan Dorman

Vincent Vaughn

Jamie

Peter Rausch

Steve

Kevin White

Roland

Jennie Israel

Rhonda

Amy Pietz

Melinda

Mitch Rouse

Jim

Lauren Katz

Elza

Chelcie Ross

Dan Devine

Christine Failla

Donna Cihak

Colleen Moore

Pretty Girls

Diana James

Mindy Hester

Casey Cooper

Jenna Chevigny

Pick-up Girls

Beth Behrends

Girl in Cafeteria

Corelle Banjoman

Walk-on

Pablo Gonzales

Groundskeeper

Spencer Grady

Kellie Malczynski

Maintenance Workers

Theodore Hesburgh

Edmund Joyce

Priests

Kent Hunsley

Mill Worker

Dennis McGowan

Barkeeper

Jennifer Patricia Phelps

Michael Scarsella

Friends

George Poorman

Senior

Robert Simmermon

Professor

Daniel 'Rudy' Ruettiger

Fan in Stands

Bob Zillmer

Usher

Scott Denny

Rick

10,423 feet

116 minutes

Dolby stereo

In colour

Prints by

Technicolor

As the final game approaches, Parseghian quits; his replacement leaves Rudy off the teamsheet. In protest, the team refuse to play until the new coach reluctantly relents.

As the game nears its conclusion, the players begin to chant for Rudy to be let on the field and, as the crowd join in, the team conspire to give themselves an unbeatable margin. With 27 seconds left, Rudy takes the field, and tackles the opposition quarterback. He is chaired from the field in triumph.

Rudy is based on the true story of Rudy Ruettiger, a poor boy with no special talent whose time with the Notre Dame football team appears to confirm the basic premise of the American Dream – that you can do anything if you try hard enough. Its appeal is almost incomprehensible out of America. In fact, the film's absorption in the dreams of Middle America seems to have made it too parochial even at home, where it flopped. It is not hard to see why. Hollywood audiences have become used to gargantuan tales of fulfilled expectation whereas Rudy is a film with a stern sense of limits. It is pinched and puritan in its scope, so antithetical to modern Hollywood in its idea of its country that it hardly seems American at all. Written by Angelo Pizzo and directed by David Anspaugh, the team behind the conventionally aspirational hit sports film *Hoosiers*, Rudy is a film of tedium and toil. Rudy's midwestern hometown, Joliet, and place of salvation, Notre Dame, are both filmed in muted hues. His desire to play football is seen by his family not as an admirable grab at the American Dream, but as doomed hubris. The riskless blue-collar life they prefer has a steel mill of hellish flame and noise at its heart. The only moment when sunlight enters the film's spectrum is on Rudy's first, militaristic morning as a footballer. Its only hint of levity is a desperately clutched copy of *National Lampoon*.

As the astonishing consistency of this numbing mood hits home, Rudy ceases to seem like a sports film. Instead, the reliance of Rudy on priests and prayer,

the sombreness of Anspaugh's fade-outs, the cinematographer's purged hues and the score's tolling bells suggest the remorseless progress of a martyr. It is an atmosphere built with such humourless conviction that one searches the credits for some hidden sponsor (*Reader's Digest* perhaps). Rudy's idea of American religion comes from its eponymous subject, a person so unimaginative that even his admiring biographers can't disguise his stupidity. Indeed, it is the uncomfortable fact of an all-American hero succeeding with a dim brain which makes Rudy watchable. There are moments when the film's makers seem ready to burst out laughing at Rudy. Other characters give him worried looks as he veers from one crazed effort to the next. But Rudy's wilfully hermetic America (untouched by early 70s tensions) copes. Every face around him, from players to students to locker-room priests, shows similar fanaticism. The effect is unsettling, a sort of *Stepford Jocks*. The film operates from so deep inside Rudy's world that it teeters on the edge of parodying it.

That it stops short is all the more frustrating, given the number of parallels which it draws between Rudy and Ronald Reagan. Directly invoked when Rudy pauses in the locker room to read the inspiring last words of legendary player "The Gipper", and suggested in other, incidental ways, the comparison between these two dangerously certain 'Good Americans' is apt. It is extended by the film's very existence, the result of Rudy pestering Anspaugh to make it, a self-mythologising project much like Reagan's own.

True to the film's Reaganite puritanical tone, Anspaugh follows none of the cheap routes to feeling good which this sort of sports film usually employs. Instead his is a plodding film, stripped of gratification. When D-Bob is comically set up with a plain girl, he marries her. When Rudy makes the team, it is for 27 seconds. These are dreams of discipline, not transcendence. It is no wonder the film looks drained of colour. Like its hero, it is stupid, boring and honest.

La Séparation

France 1994

Director: Christian Vincent

Certificate

PG

Distributor

Guilid

Production Companies

Renn productions/France 2/
D. A. Films/C. M. V.

productions
In association with
Canal +

Executive Producer

Pierre Grunstein

Producer

Claude Berri

Production Co-ordinator

Nicole Firm

Production Manager

François Barrois

Assistant Directors

Marianne Fricheau

Thierry Mauvoisin

Nicholas Borowsky

Pascal Laethier

Dominique Bordes

Script Supervisor

Sophie Thevenet-Becker

Casting

Frédérique Moidon

Screenplay

Dan Franck

Christian Vincent

Based on the novel by
Dan Franck

Director of Photography

Denis Lenoir

Editor

François Ceppi

Art Director

Christian Vallerin

Costume Design

Sylvie Gautrelet

Make-up

Nguyen Loan Thi

Hairstylist

Isabelle Lutz

Song/Music Extract

"Goldberg Variations"
by Johann Sebastian
Bach, performed by
Glenn Gould; "Happy
Birthday" by Mildred
Hill, Patty Hill

Sound

Claude Bertrand

Sound Editor

André Gaultier

Sound Mixer

Jean-Paul Loublier

Sound Effects

Jacques Tassel

Film Extract

Europe 51 (1951)

Cast

Isabelle Huppert

Anne

Daniel Auteuil

Pierre

Jérôme Deschamps

Victor

Karin Viard

Claire

Laurence Lerel

Laurence

Louis Vincent

Loulou

Hina Morato

Marie

Estelle Larrivaz

Girl at Party

Gérard Jumeil

Man at Party

Jean-Jacques Vanier

Speaker at Party

Frédéric Gelard

Estate Agent

Christian Benedetti

Lawyer

Claudine Chailier

Loulou's Grandmother

7,916 feet

88 minutes

In colour

Subtitles



Sentimental anecdote: Isabelle Huppert

mother's house where he spies on Loulou playing in the garden. When the child senses his presence, Pierre flees. Time passes and the couple meet again in a bar. Anne recounts a sentimental anecdote from their past and follows this up by reporting that her affair is now over. Pierre, friendly but seemingly indifferent to her overtures, does nothing to bring them together again. We last see Pierre on a street corner trying to hail a cab, lost in an unfamiliar corner of the city.

Christian Vincent's *La Discrete*, a comedy of sexual manners akin to a modern-day version of *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, was a considerable success in France when it was released in 1990, making celebrities of its young director and Fabrice Luchini, the Rohmer regular who played the film's obsessive seducer. *La Discrete* never made it across the channel, whereas *La Séparation* has, thanks no doubt to the combination of Isabelle Huppert and Daniel Auteuil. Dispensing with the previous feature's cruel comedy, in *La Séparation* Vincent opts for the *intimiste* mode that is favoured by many of French cinema's young auteurs these days.

La Séparation's study of the breakdown of a long-term, unmarried relationship between two former 60s radicals is in a resolutely minor key, concentrating on the exchange of telling glances and pregnant silences that degenerates into painful ultimatums. Anne's refusal to take Pierre's hand when out at the cinema - while watching Rossellini's *Europe '51* - unleashes Pierre's doubt, Anne's admission of an affair and the slow mutual spoiling of their relationship. Vincent's approach allows for two nearly faultless performances from Auteuil and Huppert in what is a defiantly interior drama, played out in the awkward room-to-room negotiation of the couple's apartment. When the action does shift beyond these claustrophobic confines one gets the sense of everything being filtered through Pierre's almost solipsistic preoccupation with his own pain and uncertainty. Combin-

ing prissy withdrawal and inkwell-eyed bleakness in his performance, the perspective of Auteuil's Pierre dominates the rift. Anna comes across as infuriatingly selfish and yet utterly convinced of the justice of her actions, no doubt because of the film's dedication to the hapless Pierre's point of view. Huppert has perfected a quality of stillness in her acting that allows her to appear both unknowable and utterly at one with herself. Her Anne acts with the courage of her compulsions while at the same time appears palely indifferent to their consequences.

The presence of Loulou, their young child, serves to focus the growing feelings of anger and despair but thankfully with a minimum of sentimentality, reduced by the distancing effect of camcorder footage. This yields a telling moment towards the end of the film when Pierre, filming Louis, wonders aloud how, in the future, he is ever going to look happily on couples with children again. If Louis occupies the film's foreground, in its background is a meditation on the emotional legacy of May '68. Pierre and Anne's radical chic has been inevitably eroded by comfortable bourgeois stability. Nevertheless, Pierre is clearly trying hard to overcome his feelings of jealousy and possessiveness in the name of a former ideology. He's shown to be clutching at straws, particularly when Victor and Claire, old friends and fellow veterans of *les événements*, announce that they intend to marry to please Victor's parents. As Pierre's feelings start to get the better of him, he begins to force the situation, widening the rift, forcing the awkwardness between him and Anne to solidify into outright hostility so that their emotional isolation from one another becomes a physical separation. We recognise that his is a gamble taken in the hope that Anne will back down and return to him on his terms, an emotional brinkmanship that serves only to decisively split them apart.

Although painstakingly crafted, there is a curiously bloodless quality about *La Séparation*. It's as though the film's emotional reticence is motivated not so much by a larger programme, as in say the films of Antonioni or Bresson, but through a kind of ascetic cinematic good manners. Vincent avoids confronting the moments that reside at the story's melodramatic heart; passion and excess are absent. *La Séparation* is a weepy *sotto voce* and strained because of it. While an anti-melodramatic treatment is understandable given the familiarity of the storyline, the film's reserve extends even to withholding the sense of a new beginning from Pierre, imprisoning him at the end of the film indecisively on a street corner. In attempting to demonstrate the emotional application of that May '68 slogan "Freedom begins with a prohibition - do not interfere with someone else's freedom," Vincent refutes its passé idealism through the treatment of his characters. Nonetheless, however precious it may be, *La Séparation* is still undeniably poignant.

Chris Darke

Species

USA 1995

Director: Roger Donaldson

Certificate

18

Distributor

UIP

Production Company

Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer

Executive Producer

David Streit

Producers

Frank Mancuso Jnr

Dennis Feldman

Associate Producer

Mark Egerton

Production Co-ordinator

Shari LaFranchi

Unit Production Manager

David Streit

Location Manager

Richard Davis Jnr

Assistant Directors

Mark Egerton

Robert Levee

Suzie Pelissier

Timothy Lonsdale

Casting

Amanda Mackey

Cathy Sandrich

Associate:

Liz Lang

Voice:

Barbara Harris

Screenplay

Dennis Feldman

Script Supervisors

Faye Brenner

Nancy Karlin

Director of Photography

Andrzej Bartkowiak

Additional Photography

LA:

Peter Deming

Utah:

Mike Benson

Camera Operator:

Mike Genne

Camera Operators

Krishna Rao

Michael Scott

Terry Bowen

Stephen St John

Steadicam Operator

Stephen St John

Visual Effects Supervisor

Richard Edlund

Steve Johnson's VFX, Inc

Production

Co-ordinator:

Joe Fordham

XFX Art Director:

Bill Corso

'Sil' Creature

Supervisor:

Norman Cabrera

'Sil' Sculptural

Supervisor:

Mike Hosch

'Sil' Puppet Paint

Scheme:

Gino Acevido

'Sil' Suit Paint Scheme:

Moto Hata

Mechanical Design

Supervisor:

Eric Feidler

'Sil' Hair Effects:

Shaun P. Smith

Broom Goehring

'Sil' Suit Fabrication:

Lynette Johnson

Dale Brady

Tamara Carlson

Chrysalis Supervisors:

Bill Bryan

Lennie Macdonald

Lab Creature

Supervisor:

Mark B. Wilson

Prosthetic Effects:

Richie Alonzo

Nigel Booth

Leon Laderach

Alien Sex Sequence

Design:

Bill Wieger

Moldmaker Supervisor:

Brent Baker

Visual Effects

Boss Film Studios:

Designer:

John Mann

Production Supervisor:

Ellen M. Somers

Co-Supervisor:

Jim Rygiel

Model Supervisor:

Dave Jones

Editor:

Theo Waddell

Matte Department

Supervisor:

Michelle Moen

Head of Software

Development:

Shahri Ibrahim

Digital Imaging

Supervisor:

Chris Edwards

Head of Physical

Integration:

André Bustanoby

Electronics Supervisor:

Jeff Platt

Post-production

Supervisor:

Mike Sweeney

Lead Motion Capture

Puppeteer:

Craig Talmei

Associate Producer:

Crystal Dowd

Co-ordinators:

Sabrina Silver

Karin Joy

Computer Graphics Imaging

Digital Consultant:

Jacques Stroweis

Technical Advisor:

Sean Phillips

Digital Model

Supervisors:

Janice Lew

Maurice Bastian

Animation Consultant:

Dale Baer

Animator/Motion

Capture:

Mark Swain

Computer Animators:

Clint Colver

Mark Pompian

Steve Cummings

Timothy Tompkins

Bill Dietrich

Chris Roda

Jason Dowdeswell

Mark Rodahl

Shine Fitzner

Alan Rosenfeld

Mike Fleming

Brian Samuels

Todd Fulford

Dave Smith

Kevin Geiger

Alex Sokoloff

Jim Green

Brian Steiner

Joe Henke

Marc Toscano

Walt Hyneman

Wayne Vincenzi

Koichi Noguchi

Chris Waegner

Rob Ostir

Dave Witters

Dane Picard

Ken Ziegler

Matte Painters:

Computer Display Graphics/Special Visual Effects
Mann Consulting:
Alex Mann
Harold Mann
Eric Bigas
Display Graphics Supervisor
Todd Aron Marks
Editor
Conrad Buff
Production Designer
John Muto
Art Director
Dan Webster
Set Design
Mick Cukurs
Set Decorator
Jackie Carr
Set Dressers
Eric J. Bates
Robert Bleckman
Michael R. Driscoll
William Kemper
Wright
Storyboard Artists
Ricardo Delgado
Grant Shaffer
Model Supervisor
Ray Moore
'Sil' Designed by Train Conceived/Designed by
H. R. Giger
Puppeteers
Winston Mike Elizade
Eric Fiedler
Robert Freitas
Joel Harlow
Lynette Leigh Johnson
Leon Laderach
Leonard MacDonald
Todd Minobe
Robert Newton
Brian Walsh
Special Effects Co-ordinator
Jeff Jarvis
Special Effects Foreman
Mike Reedy
Costume Design
Joe I. Tompkins
Costume Supervisor
Margo Baxley
Make-up Artists
Head:
Kenneth Myers
Key:
Geri B. Oppenheim
Creature/Special Make-up Effects Created by
Steve Johnson
Hairstylists
Head:
Nina Paskowitz
Key:
DJ Plumb
Title Design
Dan Perri
Titles
Cinema Research Corporation
Opticals
Howard Anderson
Company
Music
Christopher Young
Music Performed by
Synthesizer
Programming:
Mark Zimoski
Daniel Licht
Orchestrations
Christopher Young
Pete Anthony
Music Supervisor
Jellybean Benitez
Supervising Music Editor
Thomas Milano
Music Editor
George Martin
Songs/Music Extracts
"Say You're Gonna Stay" by James LaBirt,
Larry LaBirt, Kevin Oliphant, Daryl D. Bonneau, performed by Daryl D. Bonneau;
"Keep Hope Alive" by Ken Jordan, Scott Kirkland, performed by Crystal Method;
"Come Into My Life" by and performed by Joyce Sims;
"Enchanted" by Mojoe Nicosia, Dana Nicosia, performed by Enchanted; "Take Me"

by Michael Lattanzi, performed by Lattanzi featuring Crystal Taliefero; "If You Don't Know Me By Now" by Kenneth Gamble, Leon Huff, performed by Siedah Garrett
Choreography
Holly Schiffer
Sound Design/Supervising Sound Editor
Jay Boekelheide
Dialogue Editor
Dianna Stirpe
Foley Editor
Michael Mennies
Production Sound Recordist
Lee Orloff
ADR Recordist
Rick Canelli
Foley Recordists
Richard Duarte
Jim Pasque
ADR Mixer
Thomas J. O'Connell
Foley Mixer
Richard Duarte
Music Scoring Mixers
Robert Fernandez
Danny Wallin
Synthesizer Mixer
Larry Mah
DTS consultant
Mark Lewer
Sound Re-recording Mixers
Mark Berger
Randy Thom
Bob Edwards
Sound Effects Editors
Mark Jan
Wlodarkiewicz
Samuel H. Hinckley
Jennifer Ware
Douglas Murray
Foley Artists
Margie O'Malley
Jennifer Myers
Production Consultant
Lloyd Phillips
Stunt Co-ordinators
Glenn Randall Jnr
Max Kleven
Cast
Ben Kingsley
Xavier Fitch
Michael Madsen
Press
Alfred Molina
Stephen Arden
Forest Whitaker
Dan Smithson
Marg Helgenberger
Laura Baker
Natasha Henstridge
Sil
Michelle Williams
Young Sil
Jordan Lund
Don Fischer
Aides
Scott McKenna
Train Hobo
Virginia Morris
Mother
Jayne Luke
Snack Shop Clerk
Baivd K. Schroeder
German Tourist
David Jensen
Esther Scott
Conductors
Shirley Prestia
Dr Roth
William Utay
Colleague
David Seiburg
Government Man
Herta Ware
Mrs Morris
Melissa Bickerton
Fitch's Secretary
Lucy Rodriguez
Wedding Dress Saleswoman
Scott Sproule
Team Driver
Stogie Kenyatta
Cop
Gary Bullock
Motel Clerk
Susan Hauser
Lab Worker
William Bumiller
Bouncer
Caroline Barclay
Drunken Girl

Matthew Ashford
Guy in Club
Anthony Guidera
Robbie
Sarah S. Leese
Screaming Woman
Whip Hubley
John Carey
Patricia Belcher
Admittance Clerk
Richard Fancy
Doctor
Leslie Ishii
Nurse
Marliese K. Schneider
Abducted Woman
Robert Mendelson
Homeless Man
Pam Cook
Commercial Model

Lisa Liberati
Bathroom Bimbo
Ed Stone
Waiter
Dendrie Taylor
Marie
Kurtis Buraw
Baby Boy
Dana Hec
Creature Performer
Frank Welker
Voice of Alien Sil

9,763 feet
108 minutes

DTS stereo
In colour
Deluxe
Anamorphic

In a remote government research lab in Utah, top scientist Xavier Fitch gives the order to have a young girl exterminated, but she escapes. Fitch assembles a team of experts to help track down the girl: biologist Laura Baker, anthropologist Stephen Arden, psychic Dan Smithson and ex-marine Preston Lennox. The girl, named Sil, was bred from alien DNA (beamed to earth by an unknown extraterrestrial race) injected into human ova. She grew to her present 13-year-old appearance in a few weeks. Alarmed by symptoms of her alien nature, Fitch decided to terminate the experiment.

On board a train bound for Los Angeles, Sil passes through a chrysalid stage and emerges as a beautiful young woman. Fitch and his team, tracing her through a stolen credit card, realise she plans to mate. At a night club, Sil is picked up by Robbie, a rich socialite. However, sensing he has diabetes, she rejects his advances and kills him. Evading Preston, Sil is injured in a car accident and taken to hospital by a passer-by, John Carey. She heals her own injuries and leaves with Carey. They are about to make love when Preston and Laura intrude; Sil kills Carey and once again escapes.

Sil lures her pursuers into a car chase culminating in a staged accident. Fitch

declares the mission accomplished and leads his team back to the Biltmore Hotel to relax. Sil changes her appearance and makes for the Biltmore. There she seduces Stephen, becoming instantly pregnant. Sensing her presence, Dan alerts the others, but Sil kills Stephen and flees into the sewers. In the pursuit Fitch is killed by Sil; the others follow her into a tunnel leading to subterranean tar pits, where after metamorphosing into a totally alien shape she gives birth. Rescuing Dan from the newborn, Preston and Laura manage to kill both it and Sil, but a rat that has eaten a severed length of alien tentacle undergoes a strange mutation.

Walking cactuses, giant peapods, ambulatory dollops of raspberry jam – ever since the hyper-paranoid 50s, sci-fi cinema has been well supplied with malignant aliens come to devour humanity by subsuming our quivering substance into theirs. And the most deadly of these predators are always the ones (as in the various versions of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, or John Carpenter's *The Thing*) who look just like us. *Species* works a twist on this scenario by making its central entity semi-human to begin with, but then leaves the idea largely undeveloped. "Half us, half something else – I wonder which was the predatory half?" muses biologist Laura Baker, offering an intriguing re-take on the whole plot: that maybe the original extraterrestrial message really was well-intentioned, the alien race simply having no idea what a slimebucket species (namely us) they were merging their DNA with. But her remark comes only at the very end of the film, after the semi-alien has been – supposedly – destroyed.

There are earlier hints of the same submerged message – the venue where Sil does her sexual trawling is called The Id Club, suggesting she's tapping into unreconstructed areas of the human psyche – but it's never mined for its full potential. Instead *Species*

mostly settles for the conventional alien-threat-to-humanity angle, following it through a series of well-orchestrated but routine situations and relying on atmosphere, design flair and emetic detail. Robbie, Sil's first pick-up, suffers the French kiss from hell (her tongue comes straight out the back of his head) and the chrysalid stage from which the full-grown Sil emerges looks like nothing so much as a giant, pulsating doner kebab.

Making her feature film debut, super-model Natasha Henstridge not only looks drop-dead gorgeous but turns her inexperience to advantage: her air of slightly vacant puzzlement perfectly suits a six-week-old adult trying to make sense of an incomprehensible world. Her fellow lead actors, though, are left struggling with seriously underwritten roles, even if Michael Madsen does wonders with scant material. As the empath Dan, Forest Whitaker comes off worst, being limited to acting the human bloodhound ("She went that way") and coming out with startling insights like "She only kills when she feels threatened."

That *Species* borrows (from *Alien*, *Terminator II*, *Hellraiser III* and *The Third Man*, to name but a few) would hardly matter if its influences were assimilated, but instead they feel slung together, and the film doesn't always retain a grip on its own conventions. At one point, Sil seems either to have become telepathic or is speaking through Fitch's mouth – the latter option raising the possibility that Fitch too is an alien. But having served its plot purpose, the device vanishes. *Species* is pacy, stylish and consistently watchable, but as with so much Hollywood product (*Outbreak* was another recent example), an ingenious concept has been allowed to go for far less than it's worth. If given a little extra thought, a little less reliance on standard dramatic formulas, a much more interesting film could have been made here. **Philip Kemp**



Extraterrestrial angst: Natasha Henstridge

RE-RELEASE

The Wild Bunch

USA 1969

Director: Sam Peckinpah

Certificate
18

Distributor
Warner Bros

Production Company
Warner Bros/Seven Arts

Producer
Phil Feldman

Associate Producer
Roy N. Sickner

Production Manager
William Faralla

2nd Unit Director
Bill Hart

Buzz Henry
Assistant Directors
Cliff Coleman
Fred Gammon

Screenplay
Walon Green
Sam Peckinpah

Story
Walon Green
Roy N. Sickner

Script Supervisor
Crayton Smith

Director of Photography
Lucien Ballard

Editor
Louis Lombardo

Associate Editor
Robert L. Wolfe

Art Director
Edward Carrere

Special Effects
Bud Hulburd

Wardrobe Supervisor
Gordon Dawson

Make-up
Al Greenway

Music
Jerry Fielding

Music Supervisor
Sonny Burke

Sound
Robert J. Miller

Cast
William Holden
Pike Bishop
Ernest Borgnine
Dutch
Robert Ryan
Deke Thornton
Edmond O'Brien
Sykes
Warren Oates
Lyle Gorch
Jaime Sanchez
Angel
Ben Johnson
Tector Gorch
Emilio Fernandez
Mapache
Strother Martin
Coffer
L. Q. Jones
T. C.
Albert Dekker
Harrigan

Bo Hopkins
Crazy Lee
Dub Taylor
Wainscoat
Paul Harper
Ross
Jorge Russek
Zamorra
Alfonso Arau
Herrera
Chano Urueta
Don José
Bill Hart
Jess
Rayford Barnes
Buck
Steve Ferry
Sergeant McHale
Sonia Amelio
Teresa
Aurora Clavel
Aurora
Elsa Cardenas
Elsa
Elizabeth Dupeyron
Rocio
Yolanda Ponce
Yolis
Enrique Lucero
Ignacio
René Dupeyron
Juan
Ivan Scott
Paymaster
Señora Madero
Margaret
Pedro Galvan
Benson
Graciela Boring
Emma
Major Perez
Perez
Fernando Wagner
Mohr
Jorge Rado
Ernst
José Chavez
Juan José
Margarito Luna
Mapache's Assistant
Gonzalo Gonzalez
Telegraph Operator
Lilia Castillo
Lilia
Elizabeth Unda
Carmen
Julio Corona
Julio

13,017 feet
145 minutes

Original Running Time
139 minutes
Dolby stereo
In colour
Technicolor
Anamorphic

Thornton has correctly guessed this next move, but the raw recruits and border riff-raff under his command are outwitted by Bishop's gang, who steal the weapons and then blow a bridge across the Rio Grande just as Thornton's men are crossing in pursuit. They successfully deliver the arms to Mapache and collect their reward. But Mapache deduces that Angel has diverted part of the arms shipment to his fellow villagers. He allows the Americans to go free but Angel is detained and brutally treated. Bishop and his men find they are unable to abandon Angel to his fate. They return to the village where Mapache's army is celebrating its new acquisitions. In a final confrontation Bishop and his three companions turn their guns on Mapache and his entire army, killing scores of them but perishing in the effort. Later Thornton arrives on the scene. His men loot the bodies and depart, and are then themselves killed by the villagers. Thornton decides not to return to the US; instead, he waits for old Sykes, the last surviving member of Bishop's gang.

Peckinpah's masterpiece, released in the now fashionable form of a 'director's cut', eclipses all recent attempts to revive and update the Western, with the honourable exception of Eastwood's *Unforgiven*. 25 years ago Peckinpah decisively desanitised screen violence, with his slow-motion images of bullets ripping through flesh. Subsequent excesses have added nothing. *The Wild Bunch* is also one of the earliest and certainly one of the most moving expressions of the theme of the end of the West, which successive film-makers have turned into just another cliché. Peckinpah's heroes are victims of history, stranded by the ebbing away of the individualist values of the Old West, now replaced by realpolitik, faceless capitalist corporations and dehumanising technology. Peckinpah has a wonderful knack of making this come alive, contrasting past and present with a new twist to a traditional motif. Early in the film, during the bungled robbery which results in wholesale slaughter in a Texas border town, one of Pike Bishop's gang is shot off his horse and dragged down the main street, his foot caught in the stirrup. This image, familiar from a hundred other Westerns, is reprised in a new and ghastly form later. The Wild Bunch's Mexican member, Angel, is captured by General Mapache, tied to the back of his new motor car and dragged around the village square until his face is reduced to a bloody pulp. So much for progress.

The Wild Bunch has much in common with Peckinpah's *Major Dundee* (1964). In each film a band of irregulars crosses the border into Mexico, where their leader, a man haunted by his past, tries desperately to keep together a disintegrating group. Each company recuperates in a Mexican village among the 'real people' before being tested in a final confrontation with a force controlled by the European military tradi-



Pike's last stand: William Holden

tion. In each, the leader is wounded in the thigh while making love with a woman. In each we hear 'Shall We Gather at the River', inescapably a reference to the Fordian Western.

This new version of *The Wild Bunch* is very welcome, but on examination appears to be something less than promised. The most detailed account of the film's production history is in David Weddle's recent biography *If They Move...Kill 'Em: The Life and Times of Sam Peckinpah*. According to Weddle, Peckinpah's initial rough cut ran to three hours, 45 minutes. His editor, Louis Lombardo, reduced this to two hours, 45 minutes. But Warner Bros wanted a two and a half hour movie. Accordingly, Lombardo and Peckinpah further trimmed the film to two hours 31 minutes. As a result of preview reactions and the need to avoid an X-rating in the USA for excessive violence, Peckinpah then took out another six minutes, reducing the total to two hours 25 minutes. This would appear to be the version now presented to us. Unfortunately, despite much enthusiastic critical response, box office was not good. Ken Hyman, Warners' head of production and a Peckinpah supporter, was replaced by a less sympathetic new regime, headed by Ted Ashley, who ordered producer Phil Feldman to cut another 10 minutes in order to placate exhibitors, who complained the film was too long. It is this version, two hours and 15 minutes, to which Peckinpah took violent exception, which has circulated the past 25 years, and it's the 10 minutes removed by Feldman from prints after the first release that have now been restored.

The extra minutes, comprising six scenes in all, are certainly worth having. Their most important function is to fill out the relationship between Bishop and Thornton, thus explaining Thornton's ambiguous feelings about his mission. Briefly, the scenes are: a flashback of Bishop and Thornton together in a brothel, in which Thornton is shot and captured, and Bishop escapes; a scene in which it becomes clear that Bishop has abandoned one of his gang during the ambush, who turns out to be the grandson of Sykes, an old man who looks after their horses; some extra footage in the Mexican village where the gang rest up; a flashback showing Bishop getting shot

in the leg by the husband of a woman he is in bed with; and a scene of Mapache's forces being attacked by Villistas, in which Mapache makes his clear he intends to double-cross Bishop.

A print which has been seen several times on ITV since 1976 also runs to two hours, 25 minutes (allowing for the approximately 4% speed-up on television), and all six scenes which the Warners press release now lists as 'restored' are in that ITV version. The only things missing are some frames removed by the TV censors; so for example when Mapache cuts Angel's throat, we don't actually see the blood spurt in the TV version, as we do on the big screen. Even this is included in the print held by the National Film and Television Archive, regularly screened at the Museum of the Moving Image, and which contains all that Warners have now restored. So don't get too excited you're about to witness footage never before seen in public. You may have seen it already.

Peckinpah's films have sometimes been read as American versions of the Italian Spaghetti Westerns of the 1960s. Peckinpah, it is supposed, hammered the last nails into the coffin that Leone and his epigones built for the Hollywood Western. Both aestheticised violence. Bodies no longer simply fall over when shot, but spurt blood as they perform somersaults in slow motion. And the old Western values of honour and loyalty and justice appear irrelevant in a world ruled by greed and cynicism. But a quarter of a century later these similarities seem less important than the differences. Peckinpah (like Eastwood) has more in common with John Ford than with Sergio Leone. His roots in the West and the Western are deeper than Leone's, and where Leone sees only a sardonic nihilism, Peckinpah's tragic heroes are redeemed by a final gesture as romantic as it is doomed. Pike Bishop and his men finally rouse themselves to rescue their comrade Angel. Four men cannot win against Mapache's army. They will lose their lives; but they will regain their honour. It's an extravagant gesture quite beyond the calculating Leone hero, but saved from vainglory by the laconic manner in which the action is justified. "Let's go," says Pike. "Why not?" says his sidekick Dutch.

Edward Buscombe



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VIDEO

Geoffrey Macnab and Tom Tunney highlight their ten video choices of the month, and overleaf review, respectively, the rest of the retail and rental releases

VIDEO CHOICE

Heavenly Creatures

Peter Jackson/New Zealand 1994

Based on a true story of matricide, Peter Jackson's stunning psychological drama explores the intense and ultimately tragic relationship between two teenage girls in early 50s New Zealand. The film's exuberance, imagination and sheer delight in its disturbing subject matter is ideally encapsulated in the breathtaking sequence in which the two

girls gambol through a garden and rooms of a house to the strains of Mario Lanza singing 'The Donkey Serenade'. Add an Orson Welles lookalike, plus a company of eye-catching fantasy world characters, and the result is unalloyed movie magic. The screenplay employs the real diary of one of the girls to haunting effect, and both of the young leads (Melanie Lynskey, Kate Winslet) are outstanding.

(S&S February 1995) □

● Rental: Touchstone; Certificate 18



Innocence of youth: Melanie Lynskey, Kate Winslet

The Puppet Masters

Stuart Orme/USA 1994

After arriving in Iowa in a flying saucer, slug-like aliens attach themselves to the backs of their small town human hosts and set about taking over the USA. Robert A. Heinlein's source novel predates the first film version of the similarly themed *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1955). This terrific adaptation boasts some splendidly slimy special effects and an iconic performance from Donald Sutherland (who on this po-faced form could become the Peter Cushing of the 90s) as the leader of the government

team who has to stop them. Fast-paced and brimming with tongue-in-cheek (or should that be tongue-in-shirt) humour, it's also not too difficult to read this as an incisive critique of Internet optimism. One large consciousness and many individual subscribers being forcibly plugged in to the system means "You won't be lonely when you're one of us." Deliriously entertaining. □

● Rental Premiere: Hollywood; Certificate 18; 105 minutes; Producer Ralph Winter; Screenplay David Goyer, Ted Elliott, Terry Rossio; Lead Actors Donald Sutherland, Eric Thal, Julie Warner



Boys will be boys: 'Hue and Cry'

Blue Sky

Tony Richardson/USA 1991

Tony Richardson's final film is organised around the conceit of a nuclear family in a state of meltdown. Jessica Lange is the unfaithful wife of a US Army nuclear weapons expert (Tommy Lee Jones), and her performance as a wilting Marilyn Monroe wannabe is excellent (it won her a Best Actress Oscar). However, what gives the drama its special power is the way in which her character's incandescent sexuality is seen as suffocated by the milieu of a 1962 army base. Certain scenes are almost too painful to watch because of their emotional rawness. Although the plot opts too abruptly for an upbeat ending, the most impressive moments are in the riveting opening half in which her life is shown to be in shattered pieces. (S&S June 1995)

● Rental: Columbia TriStar; Certificate 15



Misfit: Jessica Lange

Hue and Cry

Charles Crichton/UK 1946

An East End lad, working as a porter in Convent Garden, learns that criminals are using a popular comic to pass messages to one another. He enlists a small army of his friends to help him bring the villains to justice. Bombed Second World War cities may have been a nightmare for most of their inhabitants, but the craters, disused buildings and mazes of rubble provided superb playgrounds for kids. Crichton's use of devastated cityscapes suggests an affinity with such neo-realist pics as Rossellini's *Germany, Year Zero*. Not that T. E. B. Clarke's script is in any way grim. It's an ingeniously plotted children's adventure of the sort penned by Richmal Crompton. While the character-playing by the likes of Alastair Sim and Jack Warner is a treat, the sheer anarchic fervour of the kids themselves is really what makes this memorable.

(MFB No. 158)

● Retail: Lumiere; £9.99; B/W; Certificate U

Finally, Sunday! (Vivement dimanche!)

François Truffaut/France 1983

With its sleek black and white cinematography (courtesy of Nestor Almendros) and playful treatment of the murder mystery genre, Truffaut's final feature harks back to his 60s efforts such as *Shoot the Pianist*. While out shooting ducks on the marshes, a cynical French



Keeping a watchful eye: Fanny Ardant

Mutiny on the Bounty

Lewis Milestone/USA 1962

Connoisseurs of widescreen, matinee-style spectacle will relish this ill-starred epic, a sort of *Waterworld* of its day. Robert Surtees' cinematography is lushly colourful; a mainly British supporting cast (with Richard Harris, Hugh Griffith and Gordon Jackson) turn in lively performances; and this edition comes complete with an intermission which allows viewers to hear Bronislaw Kaper's portentous 'Mutiny on the Bounty Overture'. Marlon Brando's foppish, very English Fletcher Christian is generally felt to be one of his weaker roles. However, in an eccentric, affected way, it's still a brave piece of acting. Charles Lederer's lumbering script suggests there was complete enmity between Bligh (Trevor Howard) and Christian from the start, making Howard's role all the more unsympathetic. Like most cinematic *folies de grandeur*, this seems considerably better in hindsight. (MFB No. 348)
● Retail: MGM/UA; £12.99; Widescreen; Certificate PG



High seas rebel: Marlon Brando

businessman (Jean-Louis Trintignant) hears a shotgun go off. One of his close associates has been murdered, and he's the prime suspect. When his unfaithful wife is also killed, the mystery thickens. Only his beautiful secretary (Fanny Ardant) can get him off the hook. It's an insubstantial affair, perhaps a little too derivative of Hitchcock for its own good, but blithely entertaining. (MFB No. 598)
● Retail: Artificial Eye; £15.99; B/W; Subtitles; Certificate PG



American abroad: 'Barcelona'

Barcelona

Whit Stillman/USA 1994

Ted (Taylor Nichols), a young American sales executive living in Barcelona, reluctantly plays host to his visiting cousin Fred (Chris Eigeman), a US navy lieutenant. As in his feature debut, *Metropolitan*, Whit Stillman's conversation-based style of cinema plays a marvellously subtle game with its upwardly mobile characters. There's certainly plenty of gentle irony at their expense, but perhaps its main strength lies in the way in which it comically articulates the often desperate sense of self which marks the boundary between youth and maturity. The film's pleasures are mainly verbal (such as Ted's straight-faced explanation of the difference between living together and being "shacked up") but Stillman's visual style is also admirably succinct, with every calmly composed moment implying a wry comment on his two heroes. (S&S February 1995)
● Rental: Columbia TriStar; Certificate 12



Cartoon life: 'Crumb'

Crumb

Terry Zwigoff/USA 1995

"I enjoy drawing, it's a deeply ingrained habit," the cartoonist Robert Crumb remarks near the start of Zwigoff's excoriating documentary. Crumb's abilities as a draughtsman are beyond question, but he also comes across as a profound misanthrope who exorcises his demons through his art. The film was shot in 1993 as he prepared to leave America and move to France. It captures sometimes embarrassingly intimate moments between Crumb, his relatives and old girlfriends, and uses rostrum cameras in a fluid fashion to bring his cartoons to life. Whether Crumb is, as critic Robert Hughes claims in the film, a Breughel for our times, is a moot point. Zwigoff neither judges him on his perceived lack of political correctness nor endorses his idiosyncratic sexual politics. Instead, he observes and by doing so, fashions a film which works as much as a study of a dysfunctional family as a portrait of the artist. (S&S July 1995)
● Retail: Artificial Eye; £15.99; Certificate 18

Eraserhead

David Lynch/USA 1976

Lynch's debut feature is a hermetic affair with a skeletal narrative, but with an abundance of bizarre, oneiric imagery. Its leading character Henry Spencer (Jack Nance) boasts one of cinema's great haircuts: short at the sides and rising upwards in a shocking mass. Lynch's influences range from Buñuel to Cocteau – and the sequence in which Henry's head topples off his neck and lands in a pool of blood recalls John the Baptist. Much of the footage of innards and molecular excrescences looks as if it has been lifted from one of those natural history documentaries on the wonders of the human body. And there's even some good old nightclub crooning along the way. A fascinating film that shows Lynch's unique eye for the bizarre and macabre. Also released as part of the David Lynch Collection are: *Blue Velvet*; *Wild at Heart*; *Twin Peaks*; *Fire Walk with Me*.
● Retail: PolyGram/Electric; £13.99; B/W; Certificate 18



Dreams are made of these: Jack Nance



Sabotaging the American dream: 'Quiz Show'

Quiz Show

Robert Redford/USA 1994

Robert Redford's wistful comedy drama looks back with longing, regret and just a hint of sarcasm to a less cynical time when fixing the questions on a television quiz show could cause a national scandal. One passing reference to Richard Nixon is a big clue to the film's moral subtext. The movie also serves as a glowing reminder of a halcyon time when television

viewing was both a communal activity and an event in its own right. The script's skilful depiction of the contours of the American class system is adroitly complemented by the inspired casting of Ralph Fiennes and John Turturro as two very different key contestants. Rob Morrow also scores highly as the young investigator whose values are clouded by his own ambition. (S&S March 1995) □
● Rental: Hollywood; Certificate 15

Reviews in Monthly Film Bulletin and Sight and Sound are cited in parentheses. A retail video that has previously been reviewed in the rental section will be listed only and the film review reference given. The term 'Premiere' refers to a film that has had no prior UK theatrical release and is debuting on video. □ denotes closed captioning facility

Rental

An Awfully Big Adventure

Mike Newell; UK 1994; FoxVideo; Certificate 15
In Liverpool in 1947, an impressionable 16-year-old (Georgina Cates) joins a repertory company. Handsome, witty and ably performed, this is packed full of telling small details and incisively drawn character conflict. However, all the effort and expertise seems wasted on a thuddingly obvious dénouement. (S&S April 1995) □

I.D.

Philip Davis; UK 1994; PolyGram; Certificate 18
An undercover police team who infiltrate a gang of football hooligans begin to relish their violent new lives. Despite the four letter words, the performances are straight out of the *EastEnders* school of miserable working class stereotypes. The film also confuses football hooligans with football fans and the deeply condescending result has the finesse of a tabloid news story. However, despite its flaws, I.D. does display some admirable kinetic energy, and the male bonding scenes (at one point the cops leave their boring wives at a restaurant table and retire to the toilets to talk about football) are unintentionally hilarious. (S&S May 1995)

Leon

Luc Besson; France 1994; Hollywood; Certificate 18
A French hit-man (Jean Reno) strikes up a protective friendship with an orphaned girl (Nathalie Portman). Luc Besson's outsider's view of New York is replete with graceful mayhem, scenery-chewing locals (not least Gary Oldman's corrupt cop) and moments of sublime black comedy. (S&S February 1995) □

Poetic Justice

John Singleton; USA 1993; 20.20 Vision; Certificate 15
Four young African-Americans ceaselessly bicker while driving from South Central



A way with words: 'Poetic Justice'

LA to Oakland. John Singleton's follow-up to *Boyz n the Hood* often seems in danger of drowning in the same sea of four letter words as its characters. However, the framing of the drama around Maya Angelou's poetry suggests that that could be its very point: these are people trapped as much by confrontational language as by hard circumstances. Overly schematic, but worthwhile. (S&S May 1995) □

Silent Tongue

Sam Shepard; USA 1992; EVE; Certificate 12
A young man (River Phoenix) grieves in the desert over the corpse of his Native American bride. Meanwhile his father (Richard Harris) attempts to buy her sister from Alan Bates' medicine show. A portentous and pretentious Western in which Bates's Irish accent spins out of control and the symbolism is trundled out by the slow wagon load. (S&S March 1995)

Rental premiere

Bank Robber

Nick Mead; USA 1993; EVE; Certificate 18; 89 minutes; Producer Lila Cazes; Screenplay Nick Mead; Lead Actors Patrick Dempsey, Lisa Bonet, Judge Reinhold, Forest Whitaker
A moribund would-be comedy in which bank robber Patrick Dempsey hides out in a hotel where everyone recognises him and wants a share of his loot. Imagine *Barton Fink* remade as a teen movie - or better still don't. Several gratuitous

bedroom scenes, a Miles Copeland III cameo and a lack of decent jokes complete the depressing picture.

Blankman

Mike Binder; USA 1994; Columbia TriStar; Certificate 12; 92 minutes; Producers Eric L. Gold, C. O. Erikson; Screenplay Damon Wayans, J. F. Lawton; Lead Actors Damon Wayans, Robin Givens, David Alan Grier, Jon Polito
Damon Wayans bumbles around in fussy Jerry Lewis-style as an inventor turned home-made super hero. Grittier and a tad more cynical than Robert Townsend's somewhat similar *Meteor Man*, the script also shows off a pleasing affection for the Splat! Bam! style of the *Batman* television shows. Small scale but likeable.

Bodily Harm

James Lemmo; USA 1994; High Fliers; Certificate 18; 87 minutes; Producer Bruce Cohn Curtis; Screenplay Joseph Whaley, Ronda Barendse, James Lemmo; Lead Actors Linda Fiorentino, Daniel Baldwin, Greg Henry, Millie Perkins
In *The Last Seduction* Linda Fiorentino was in control of everything. Here, disappointingly, it's back to men controlling her. In this awkwardly plotted thriller she plays a Las Vegas detective who investigates an ex-lover turned multiple murder suspect (Baldwin). As her shrink says: "Any woman attracted to this man would have to have a sick flirtation with self-destruction." Quite.

China Moon

John Bailey; USA 1991; Columbia TriStar; Certificate 18; 99 minutes; Producer Barrie M. Osborne; Screenplay Roy Carlson; Lead Actors Ed Harris, Madeleine Stowe, Charles Dance, Benicio del Toro
Competent thriller hokum in which homicide detective Ed Harris meets Madeleine Stowe and soon finds himself helping to dispose of her husband's (Charles Dance) body. Dance's deep South accent leaves a lot to be desired but Stowe makes a good enigmatic heroine; and Harris exudes tense class - even when delivering such clunking lines as "I'm an orphan of destiny. I see life in all its dirty details. You know how it is?"

Flinch

George Erschbamer; USA 1992; High Fliers; Certificate 15; 89 minutes; Producers Murray Shostak, Jeff Barmash; Screenplay Neal H. Dobrofsky, Tippi Dobrofsky; Lead Actors Judd Nelson, Gina Gershon, Nick Mancuso
An unflinchingly awful comedy thriller about two shop window models (Judd Nelson and Gina Gershon) who witness a murder. The dialogue just lies and dies there, and Nelson's bargain basement smarminess is horrendous.

Night Train to Venice

Walter Giredecki; Germany 1993; Columbia TriStar; Certificate 15; 98 minutes; Producer Toni Hirtreiter; Screenplay Toni Hirtreiter, Leo Tichat; Lead Actors Hugh Grant, Tahnee Welch, Malcolm McDowell
A Scottish writer (an unflappable Hugh Grant) attempts to deliver his book on the German neo-Nazi movement to Inferno Publishing in Venice, but his trip takes a bizarre turn when he gets on the train. Inspired by Roeg's *Don't Look Now*, this delectably daft psycho-drama is directed without regard for probability or plot coherence. The actors don't seem to have

a clue what's going on, but this helps to give the film the bizarre shifting sensation of a dream. Malcolm McDowell hams it up as a mysterious stranger, and a gang of skinheads and a singing transvestite are thrown in for good measure. Wonderfully inane. (Note: Walter Giredecki's credit on the tape is Supervising Director.)

Reckless Kelly

Yahoo Serious; 1993 Australia; Warner; Certificate PG; 76 minutes; Producers Yahoo Serious, Warwick Ross; Screenplay Yahoo Serious; Lead Actors Yahoo Serious, Melora Hardin, Hugo Weaving, Alexei Sayle
A ramshackle but occasionally rewarding comedy in which Yahoo Serious plays a latter day Ned Kelly who takes on the financial establishment (Hugo Weaving as a stuffy British banker) and then goes to Hollywood. The film's surprisingly caustic anti-British bias includes Kelly replacing the Union Jack in the Australian flag with a kangaroo design beer mat and Alexei Sayle as an officious English cop. □

Replikator

G. Philip Jackson; Canada 1994; High Fliers; Certificate 18; 96 minutes; Producers Dan D'Or, David McGuire; Screenplay Michelle Bellerose, Tony Johnston, John Dawson; Lead Actors Michael St Gerard, Brigitte Bako, La Cicciolina, Ned Beatty
A maverick scientist (Michael St Gerard) produces a serial killer clone of himself. Despite a narrative which is cluttered to the point of being incomprehensible, a strong visual imagination and a keen line in tabloid television satire (viewers are invited to vote in on the Justice Channel and qualify for Lotto Justice prizes) make this a superior addition to the *Blade Runner* rip-off school of sci-fi.

Separate Lives

David Madden; USA 1994; High Fliers; Certificate 18; 98 minutes; Producers Mark Amin, Diane Nabatoff, Guy Reidel; Screenplay Steven Pressfield; Lead Actors James Belushi, Linda Hamilton, Vera Miles
Dejected performances and suspenseless direction are the keynotes of this amusingly inept thriller about a shrink with a split personality (Linda Hamilton) who hires an ex-cop turned psychology student (James Belushi) to follow her.

Shrunken Heads

Richard Elfman; USA 1994; EVE; Certificate 18; 83 minutes; Producer Charles Band; Screenplay Matthew Bright; Lead Actors Aeryk Egan, Julius Harris, Meg Foster
An ex-Haitian cop (Julius Harris) uses voodoo magic to bring to life the shrunken heads of three murdered youngsters. As with most of producer Charles Band's recent movies, this is a promising idea ruined by shoddy production values and an inadequate script. Danny Elfman's theme tune is a minor plus.

Wes Craven Presents Mind Ripper

Joe Gayton; USA 1995; Medusa; Certificate 18; 91 minutes; Producer Jonathan Craven; Screenplay Jonathan Craven, Phil Mittleman; Lead Actors Lance Henriksen, Claire Stansfield, John Diehl, Natasha Wagner
A group of scientists run around an underground bunker while being pursued by the latest video premiere attempt at a super soldier to go wrong. The creature has a pointy tentacle in his



Father figure: Jean Reno in 'Leon'

A French affair

The following scene takes place 19 minutes and 45 seconds into François Truffaut's 1981 film, *The Woman Next Door* (*La Femme d'à côté*):

Bernard (Gérard Depardieu) is in a supermarket staring a hole in a shelf of food. In the background we see Mathilde (Fanny Ardant) slide across into the frame, spot Bernard and decide to come and talk to him. They shop and talk about what an unfortunate coincidence it is that she and her husband have moved into the house next to him (and his wife and small child). How they haven't seen each other for over eight years, since the end of their love affair. How she was unhappy at the time, that she couldn't take any more and walked out of his life. However, they are both older now, mature enough to deal with the situation and also both lucky they have found such great partners. Mathilde thinks that Bernard has a great wife and Bernard feels the same about Mathilde's husband.

We cut to the underground car park, and in a long single take we follow Bernard and Mathilde as they walk and talk their way to the car. Bernard is pushing a trolley full of grocery bags. We learn that neither of them has confessed their past relationship to their new partners. They stop for a while and there is a moment when we catch a glimpse of exposed emotion on Mathilde's face as she talks about the pain of their break-up, but she holds it in check and they resume walking. (So far, there has been no music at all on the soundtrack.)

She tells him that he and his wife are invited to dinner next week and she hopes that he will turn up this time (a reference to the fact that he ducked out of the last dinner). "I'll be there," he says "your faithful servant." His face has a curious half smile. They have reached the car and she opens the back door and he hands her the bags as she packs them. (The car is unlocked which makes me wonder if this is a comment on the relative safety of France in the early 80s, or the director's decision that it was a lot quicker than having to do the scene fumbling with car keys.) He watches her with this funny half smile as she packs, and when she has finished, he hands her her shoulder bag. (It's difficult to say why exactly, but the way Depardieu does this is rather fine. He is a really interesting actor, and as I write this piece I realise there is no-one like him in the British or American acting world.) She takes the bag from him, shuts the back door and they both sort of grin at each other. She says: "Shall we kiss on it?" (being French, this actually means 'Shall we shake on it?'), and they do a formal double cheek job. She opens the driver's door and faces him (the door is between them). We have by now cut out of the long master shot and are now in a tighter two shot which will hold to the end of the scene. She: "One more request... will you say my name from time to time? I used to know when you were feeling hostile because you'd go a whole day without calling me



Passionate moments: Gérard Depardieu and Fanny Ardant

Mathilde." He stares at her with the same odd smile as she continues. "I'm sure you don't even remember." He looks down and sighs, then looks at her and moves around the car door so they are now next to each other. He puts his right hand onto the side of her face (his hands are huge) and says "Mathilde." He says this in a very gentle way. She puts her hand onto his and rubs her face against his hand, then they look at each other, and then they kiss. It's quite a long kiss and, unlike most screen kisses, it's believable. It's the kiss of two ex-lovers who have just realised that the 'ex' is redundant. She eases out of the kiss and her eyes close and she falls to the ground in a dead faint. At this point the music comes in for the first time and it's a very good piece of dramatic, romantic score which really pulls at your heart, especially when Bernard says "Mathilde" over and over again as he cradles her head in those huge hands. She opens her eyes and he helps her up. She gives him a tragic glance as she gets into the car and starts the engine. He says "Sure you can drive?", but she doesn't answer, just floors the accelerator and drives out of the shot leaving Bernard standing alone.

This is a very good film. I've seen it twice now. The first time was at the

Phoenix in London and again recently on video. Both times it made me sad (which is good). Let's face it, most films are very boring and vanish quickly from memory.

Wasn't this Truffaut's penultimate film? And wasn't he with the stunning Fanny Ardant at the time? This must have been a tough film for him to make. I think he must have been pretty sad when he shot it. But that is not why the film is so good. The script is very tight, every scene is about one or both of the lovers; the acting is really good and very believable. It's not a sentimental film (and here the sparse use of music is a plus). It's quite erotic but the sex never takes over, it's just something that lovers need to do, they have to have each other. I don't think it's ever funny, but there is a very French scene in which Depardieu cannot get to grips with his car and is very uncool. His job is pretty strange too - he seems to be a driving instructor for supertankers, and we keep seeing him on a scale model of a ship in a scale model of a harbour. It's not the sort of job Tom Cruise would do.

Other reasons why I love this film; it's got so much heart, and it seems to be about something. Check it out.

The Woman Next Door is an Artificial Eye release

mouth and feeds on the brains of humans. Mind-numbingly derivative.

With Honors

Alek Keshishian; USA 1994; Warner; Certificate PG; 96 minutes; Producers Paula Weinstein, Amy Robinson; Screenplay William Mastrosimone; Lead Actors Joe Pesci, Brendan Fraser, Moira Kelly, Patrick Dempsey, Gore Vidal

An incredibly mawkish comedy drama about a Harvard political science student (Brendan Fraser) who befriends a tramp (Joe Pesci). Director Alek Keshishian (*In Bed with Madonna*) fails to invest the sugary scenario with either irony or humour; Fraser looks permanently embarrassed and Madonna's title song is also a resounding miss. Only Gore Vidal as a cynical professor survives with his dignity intact. ☐

Retail

Agatha

Michael Apted; USA/UK 1978; Warner Rhapsody Collection; £10.99; Certificate PG In the mid-20s, Agatha Christie, then just embarking on her career as a crime novelist, vanished for 11 days. Kathleen Tynan's novel, from which this film is adapted, suggests she ran away to a Harrogate Hotel and attempted to kill herself. This boasts some heavyweight talent - Vanessa Redgrave is Christie and Dustin Hoffman is the tenacious newsound who investigates her disappearance. Detailed costume and production design and Vittorio Storaro's rich Technicolor cinematography ensure the film looks handsome, but the storyline is slight and opaque. (MFB No. 545)

Anna Christie/Camille

Clarence Brown/George Cukor; USA 1930/1937; MGM/UA; £12.99; B/W; Certificate PG A weary young woman lurches into a bar, sits herself down and orders the barman to "Give me a viskey... don't be stingy." "Shall I put it in a pail?" he replies. Greta Garbo's voice in *Anna Christie*, her first talkie, sounds rougher, deeper and much more cynical than fans would have probably expected. The film is a static, creaky affair, played out in docks and bars which effectively evoke a low-life atmosphere. In contrast, *Camille*, set in fashionable nineteenth century France, has a positively glowing Garbo playing Dumas' consumptive courtesan. Both films were shot by her favourite cinematographer, William Daniels. (MFB Nos. 523/38)

A.P.E.X.

Philip J. Roth; USA 1993; M.I.A.; £10.99; Certificate 15 (S&S Video June 1994)



Mine's a double: Greta Garbo in 'Anna Christie'



Designer blood: Susan Sarandon, Catherine Deneuve in 'The Hunger'

The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz

Ted Kotcheff; Canada 1975; First Class Films; £15.99; Certificate 15
Richard Dreyfuss stars as the eponymous hero, a young Jewish boy on the make during the 40s in Montreal. Rambling, uneven, but frequently hilarious, this rites-of-passage saga is enlivened by one of Denholm Elliot's great cameos. He plays a drunken English film director, hired by Duddy to shoot movies of bar mitzvahs and weddings. His first effort, which juxtaposes images of circumcision with footage of comedians swallowing razor blades, is a masterpiece of pretension. (MFB No. 493)

Atlantic City

Louis Malle; Canada/France 1980; First Class Films; £15.99; Certificate 15
In Malle's gentle, enrapturing pastiche of the gangster film, Burt Lancaster is like the city he live in - all sham. He dresses flamboyantly, claims he was a big-time hoodlum in the days of Capone, but is really just a foolish old man who spends much of his time walking his shrewish wife's dog. Susan Sarandon plays the tough casino waitress who sees through him. John Guare's script lays on the humour and pathos without ever degenerating into whimsy. (MFB No. 564)

Au Pair Girls

Val Guest; UK 1972; Jezebel; £12.99; Certificate 18
In his day, Val Guest directed two minor classics, *Hell is a City* and *The Day the Earth Caught Fire*. It would be nice to think he was only roped into making this atrocious piece of softcore porn for the money, but as he also provided the script he can't get off so lightly. The movie takes the form of a series of sketches, each charting the amorous adventures of au pair girls in 70s Britain. *Coronation Street* fans will note Johnny Briggs appearance with interest. (MFB No. 465)

The Client

Joel Schumaker; USA 1994; Warner Home Video; £14.99; Certificate 15
(S&S November 1994) □

Color of Night

Richard Rush; USA 1994; Guild Home Video; £12.99; Certificate 18
(S&S October 1994)

Curse of the Werewolf

Terence Fisher; UK 1961; Terror Vision Hammer Original; £10.99; Certificate 12
Minor Hammer classic, shot in gaudy Technicolor, which offered Oliver Reed

(as Leon the werewolf) one of his first substantial roles. "Even by Hammer's standards, this is a singularly repellent job of slaughterhouse horror," was one critic's response, but the film evokes as much pathos as it does terror. (MFB No. 329)

The Hunger

Tony Scott; USA 1983; Terror Vision Horror Classic; £12.99; Widescreen; Certificate 18
Scott's background in commercials shows all too clearly in this designer horror movie, full of arresting imagery but with a flimsy narrative. Catherine Deneuve and David Bowie are vampires in present-day New York who must keep on sucking blood to retain their looks. Given the seemingly ageless quality of both stars, it is apt casting. (MFB No. 592)

Island of Terror

Terence Fisher; UK 1966; Art House; £12.99; Certificate 15
A scientist working on a cure for cancer on a remote island off the Irish Coast unleashes a virus which kills animals and people alike by rotting away their bones. The local doctor rushes to London to fetch the experts, Peter Cushing and Edward Judd, but they're as baffled as he is. Then they see the slithering creepy-crawlies.... Routine British horror, easy to scoff at, but strangely compelling. (MFB No. 390)

Last Tango in Paris

Bernardo Bertolucci; Italy/France 1972; MGM/UA; £9.99; Certificate 18
Brando gives one of his finest performances in this anguished study of grief and sexual obsession. Viewers not fluent in French should be warned that, on the preview copy at least, the scenes between Maria Schneider and her boyfriend, film-maker Jean-Pierre Léaud, are unsubtitled. (MFB No. 472)

The Lion King

Roger Allers, Rob Minkoff; USA 1994; Walt Disney Classics; £16.99; Certificate U
(S&S October 1994)

Logan's Run

Michael Anderson; USA 1976; Beyond Vision Sci-Fi Classic; £14.99; Certificate PG
Hi-tech sci-fi drama set in a futuristic world which looks suspiciously like a modern day shopping mall, and in which nobody is allowed to live beyond the age of 30. Michael York plays a 29-year-old who is less than enamoured at the prospect of being terminated come his next birthday. He goes on the run, taking

his young mistress, Jenny Agutter with him. Although the movie won an Oscar for special effects, it has a very dated 70s look. Anderson directs with gusto, and there's an enjoyable piece of hamming from Peter Ustinov as the old man the runaways meet on their travels. (MFB No. 513)

Lord of the Flies

Peter Brook; UK 1963; Lumiere; £9.99; B/W; Certificate PG
Peter Brook's adaptation of William Golding's novel makes an interesting companion piece to his film of *King Lear*, made a few years later. Both are stark and exceedingly pessimistic: a little adversity, they suggest, is all that is needed to unleash the savagery lurking behind civilised facades. Brook's problem here, (and one he never really overcomes) is how to preserve the allegorical force of the original without turning the picture into a conventional *Boy's Own* adventure. (MFB No. 368)

Lorna Doone

Basil Dean; UK 1935; Lumiere; £9.99; B/W; Certificate PG
Basil Dean's version of R. D. Blackmore's historical romance might have worked better if it had been cast a little more astutely. Margaret Lockwood, surely the ideal Lorna Doone, is relegated to a supporting role, while vapid, listless Victoria Hopper takes the plum part. The Exmoor countryside, where the murderous Doones hold sway, is photographed nicely enough, but most of the performances are wooden and Dean doesn't direct with any kind of fluidity. This is released under the new Lumiere banner of 'Britain's finest films' but it isn't a patch on a good, full-blooded Gainsborough melodrama. (MFB No. 12)

The Lost Boys

Joel Schumaker; USA 1987; Terror Vision Horror Classic; £12.99; Widescreen; Certificate 15
Dianne West and her family move to a new town. In time-honoured fashion, the kids make friends with the biker dudes in the local gang, who just happen to be vampires. As with all Joel Schumaker films, this is nothing if not slick. There may be something a little glib about the way he marries teen pic with horror movie, but even old genres need an injection of fresh blood now again to survive. (MFB No. 648)

Maverick

Richard Donner; USA 1994; Warner Home Video; £14.99; Certificate PG
(S&S August 1994) □

My Life

Bruce Joel Rubin; USA 1993; Fox Video; £10.99; Certificate 15
(S&S April 1994)

On the Buses/Mutiny on the Buses

Harry Booth; UK 1971/1973; Warner Home Video; £9.99; Certificate PG
Big screen spin-offs from the television sitcom. Reg Varney and Bob Grant reprise their roles as lazy, lecherous bus conductors. If you like saucy, vulgar 70s comedy, this is just the ticket. (MFB Nos. 451/464)

Police Story 3

Stanley Tong; Hong Kong 1992; Hong Kong Classics; £10.99; Certificate 15
(S&S Video October 1994)

Pulp Fiction

Quentin Tarantino; USA 1994; Touchstone Home Video; Widescreen; £14.99
(S&S November 1994)

The Punk and the Princess

Mike Sarne; UK 1993; PolyGram Video; £10.99; Certificate 15
(S&S December 1994)

Les Roseaux sauvages

André Téchiné; France 1993; Tartan Video; £15.99; Subtitles; Certificate 15
Writer/director Téchiné expertly blends private experience with seismic events in the outside world in this rites-of-passage drama set in a rural French school during the early 60s. At the height of the Algerian war, three adolescent boys, each with different attitudes toward sex, study and politics, try to make sense of the changes going on around them. (S&S March 1995)

The Sex Thief

Martin Campbell; UK 1973; Jezebel; £12.99; Certificate 18
David Warbeck plays a suave young novelist who moonlights as a cat burglar. Under the cover of darkness and wearing an absurd Zorro-style outfit, he rampages through London homes, seducing wealthy women and stealing their jewellery. Surely this can't be the film that won Martin Campbell the directing job on the new Bond movie, *Golden Eye*. It's tawdry, ridiculous fare, only marginally redeemed by its own self-mocking humour. (MFB No. 476)

Speed

Jan De Bont; USA 1994; Fox Video; £14.99; (Widescreen £15.99); Certificate 15
(S&S October 1994)

A Streetcar Named Desire

Elia Kazan; USA 1951; MGM/UA; £12.99; B/W; Certificate 15
"You men with your big clumsy fingers," Blanche DuBois (Vivien Leigh) admonishes Stanley Kowalski (Marlon Brando) when he makes a mess of buttoning up the back of her dress. The sexual tension between the couple is already there in Tennessee Williams' play, but Kazan's claustrophobic direction and the two intense star performances make it all the more taut. Leigh is delicate and flirtatious, whereas Brando, primed by his method guru Stella Adler, moves, mumbles and sweats his way through his role. This classic hasn't dated in the slightest. (MFB No. 218)



'A Streetcar Named Desire': Brando, Leigh

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THE ADJUSTER

By Richard Falcon



Testing the censors: Adult manga videos are running into trouble with the BBFC

Manga mania continues to flourish. While the manga (literally 'irresponsible pictures') comics which began the phenomenon have passed into mainstream publishing (Bloomsbury's *Ironfist Chinmi* series of books are the first to be published reading right to left in English), the animated videos (anime) make up an ever increasing and successful niche of the video market. The catalogue of Manga Entertainment Video (the original UK distributors of manga videos) boasts over a hundred titles, and the company has sold over one million videos since its launch in 1992.

Manga films can offer pretty unenlightened views of women, and it is the adult category end of the market, which creates censorship problems and often causes the *otaku* - serious manga fan - to rail at the overfiends at the BBFC. Approximately one third of Manga Video titles are 18 certificated. Two recent 18 rated 'OAVs' (manga fan-speak acronym for Original Animation Video) - Kiseki Films' *Adventure Duo* (*Youjyusensen*) and East To West Films' *The Adventures of Kekkou Kamen* (billed as the biggest anime of the year) - illustrate some of the difficulties the Board encounters when certificating more hardcore examples of 'irresponsible pictures'.

The series *Youjyusensen* is about a teenage hacker who encounters a scientist who has metamorphosed into a huge 'bio-computer'. 50 years earlier, the scientist's wife was raped by an army commander just as the scientist was trying to stop the Hiroshima bomb. Described, a little misleadingly, by the *Kiseki Fanime* (an advertorial "prozone" published by the company) as "the weirdest sexual sitcom in anime," the series contains comedy (a pervert troll from Hell), apocalyptic fantasy and eroticised scenes of sexual violence which include zombie Japanese soldiers gang raping a group of nurses and a lengthy scene in which the scientist's wife is tied up and raped. These sequences were cut (one minute seven seconds from the first episode, and seven minutes 35 seconds from the next), as there was a consensus at the BBFC that they glamorised and derived erotic appeal from violence.

Where there are detailed depictions of rape in a film, even in cartoons, the Board has to consider them potentially corrupting under the Obscene Publications Act. The Act requires the

BBFC to take into account the effect of the film on its likely audience. In a recent poll of its readers, the fanzine *Manga Mania* revealed that 94 per cent were males in their teens. Given this juvenile appeal, the title *Adventure Kids* was also considered problematic as it was seen to be appealing to a young audience. (The word 'kid' is often used by Hollywood to signal a junior martial arts movie, for example, *Karate Kid* and *3 Ninja Kids*.) The Board insisted on a title change and the company renamed it *Adventure Duo*.

Another video to cause lengthy debate is *The Adventures of Kekkou Kamen*. An outrageous comedy, it is set in a Japanese school run by sadists who discipline the students in a torture chamber. In each episode an unfortunate female student, Miyumi, is tortured by a 'punishment instructor' - in the first cartoon it's by a blonde Nazi woman with S&M emblazoned on her uniform who has arrived from Auschwitz College, in the second it's by a muscle-bound Austrian narcissist in a tracksuit called Taro Schwarzenegger. The superheroine, Kekkou Kamen, who is naked apart from red boots, a mask and a pair of nunchaku sticks, rescues the schoolgirl just in time. ("No-one will marry me now," weeps Miyumi, as the large swastika she is tied to starts to revolve to reveal her private parts to the pervert teachers.) Go Nagai, who wrote the cartoon strip it is based on, apparently meant it as a satire on the corporate-driven Japanese education system which he compares to Nazi concentration camps. A UK manga expert has described it as "a demented Japanese version of a seaside postcard." In the opinion of the Board, the film contained elements of titillating sexual violence in the treatment of the schoolgirl victim, with the result that three minutes and 59 seconds of footage was cut.

However, *Kekkou Kamen* offers hybrid pleasures in the British version. The theme song, sung by a cheerful sounding Japanese pop singer, boasts such lines as: "She's a goolie-kicking naked superhero/We see her dumplings but her face remains a mystery/If she sees a teacher, she'll kick his bollocks in." It's a strange collision of comic cultures when a satire on Japanese sexual mores (a society in which Tokyo vending machines dispense packets of schoolgirls' knickers) is translated into the language of *Viz* magazine - 'Mangas oot fer the lads!'

THX-1138

George Lucas; USA 1970; Beyond Vision Sci-Fi Classic; £12.99; Certificate 15
Eerie, very beautiful sci-fi film with a plot which is at least half borrowed from George Orwell's 1984, but has a visual elegance all its own. The story is set in a totalitarian future where sex is forbidden. Robert Duvall is the Winston Smith-like character who rebels, Donald Pleasence his nemesis. The plot unfolds at a snail-like pace, but this is as much a piece of performance art as a conventional thriller. Lucas makes startling use of close-ups and antiseptic white backgrounds. (MFB No. 450)

Tout va bien

Jean-Luc Godard, Jean-Pierre Gorin; France 1972; Tartan Video; £15.99; Subtitles; Certificate 15
Godard and Gorin, still in polemical post-68 mood, use what seems like a conventional star vehicle (Jane Fonda is a journalist, Yves Montand her film-maker husband) to explore labour relations in a factory during a bitter strike. The movie opens with cheques being written to the cast and crew who made it, and playfully lays bare its own devices throughout. (MFB No. 478)

Ulysses

Joseph Strick; UK 1967; Lumiere; £9.99; B/W; Certificate 18
Adapting James Joyce's modernist masterpiece for the cinema was bound to be a forlorn endeavour, but Strick makes a brave stab. His film boasts a wonderfully woebegone Leopold Bloom in Milo O'Shea. Its attempts at finding visual equivalents for Joyce's prose are often crude, but the ingenious use of music and voice-overs and evocative Dublin locations are some compensation. And there's no prudery here - the scene in which Bloom masturbates while gazing longingly at Gertie McDowell on the beach is shown in full. (MFB No. 404)

Xala (The Curse)

Ousmane Sembene; Senegal 1974; Connoisseur Video; £15.99; Subtitles; Certificate 12
Sembene's scathing satire is set in an African state shortly after the colonial era. A clique of corrupt businessmen who are running the country adopt western airs and graces. But when one, El Hadj, buys himself a third wife, he's afflicted with the curse - impotence. His attempts at curing himself bring humiliation and ruin. (MFB No. 515)

Retail premeire

The Best of British Animation: Bob's Birthday/Creature Comforts/Manipulation/Adam/Second Class Mail/The Big Story

Alison Snowden, David Fine/Nick Park/Daniel Greaves/Peter Lord/Tim Watts, David Stoten; UK 1984-1995; £8.99; Colour & B/W; Certificate PG
Six British animated shorts, all of them nominated for Oscars. Old clichés about cartoons being for children are thrown into relief by Alison Snowden's and David Fine's *Bob's Birthday*, a sardonic comedy about a middle-aged dentist. The animation here is more reminiscent of *Viz* than of Disney prototypes. The

humour is also deadpan and very British. Nick Park's *Creature Comforts*, though equally inventive and funny, suffers from its own cutesy anthropomorphism.

The Frontline

Paul Terence Hills; UK 1993; Screen Edge; £12.99; Certificate 18; 77 minutes; Producer/Screenplay Paul Terence Hills; Lead Actors Vincent Philipps, Amanda Noar, Geoffrey Leesley, LeRoy Cooper.
Shot on a tiny budget by a 20-year-old writer/producer/director/editor, this grim drama set in Manchester's Moss Side bristles with energy and attitude. But it is somewhat let down by a preposterous script (former madman's junkie DJ girlfriend is murdered by fascist-leaning MP) and patchy sound quality.

Grand Hotel

Edmund Goulding; USA 1932; MGM/UA; £9.99; B/W; Certificate U; 115 minutes; Producer Irving Thalberg; Screenplay William A. Drake; Lead Actors Greta Garbo, Joan Crawford, John Barrymore, Wallace Beery
A colourful selection of guests, each with their own story to tell, while away the time in a luxurious Berlin hotel. This is the quintessential Irving Thalberg film - glossy, packed with the big stars of the day and taking obvious pleasure in flaunting its lavish production values.

The Pope of Utah

Chiam Bianco, Steven Saylor; USA 1993; Screen Edge; £12.99; Certificate 18; 82 minutes; Producer Unknown; Screenplay Chiam Bianco, Steven Saylor; Lead Actors Lee Golden, Tom McCarthy, Ginny Brown Graham
Brash, in-your-face satire on television evangelism. Set in Utah in the twenty first century, this mingles video, computer graphics and film in a striking fashion. It also boasts a superbly nasty comic creation in Melvis Pressin, the Chubby Brown of evangelism: "Your sins are the stain and I am the paper towel."

The Upstairs Neighbour

James Merendino; USA 1994; Screen Edge; £12.99; Certificate 18; 90 minutes; Producer Matt Develen; Screenplay James Merendino; Lead Actors Sebastian Gutierrez, Rustam Branaman, Christina Fulton
Disappointingly derivative thriller with echoes of everything from *Barton Fink* to *Repulsion*. A novelist with writer's block hears strange knockings from his upstairs neighbour. When he investigates, he begins to be harassed by hoax telephone calls. The neighbour in question is a Ray Liotta-type, a devil-worshipper who carries out ritualised amputations.

Whoever Says the Truth Will Die

Philo Bregstein; Netherlands 1981; Academy Video; £12.99; Partially subtitled; Certificate 12; 59 minutes; Producer Harry Prins, Frank Diamond; Screenplay Philo Bregstein
Bregstein's moving documentary about Pier Paolo Pasolini looks at its subject's career as a poet, polemicist, novelist and film-maker. It charts his early fascination with Gramsci; his unconventional brand of Marxism, and his collaboration with Fellini. There are interviews with Bertolucci (Pasolini's assistant on *Accattone*), Moravia (who rates his friend's verse as the finest of its generation) and various colleagues. Bregstein also casts doubts on the circumstances surrounding Pasolini's mysterious murder in 1975.

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Not meant to be history

From Sheldon Hall

Was Colin McArthur's uncharacteristically crass, pedantic review of *Braveheart* (S&S September) a put-up job? Having this critic write about this film is a bit like the *Daily Mail* asking Norman Stone to review Derek Jarman's *Edward II* or *The Last of England* (as I recall it did a few years ago): knowing full well what he's likely to make of it, you throw him the film like live meat to a ravenous dog, and stand back to enjoy the gory spectacle (duly delivered).

While McArthur's aversion to any movie betraying even a glimpse of a kilt is well-known, his review's insensitivity to the conventions of genre – from the author of *Underworld USA!* – was nonetheless provoking. Linking Mel Gibson's excellent film to the "regressive discourses" of Tartanry and "Dark Ageism", he neglected to relate it to the equally pertinent – and less odious – discourses of historical romance and mythic epic – a dismissive reference to Errol Flynn's *Robin Hood* (why just this version and not the legend as a whole?) apart, no attempt was made to situate *Braveheart* within a narrative tradition which also encompasses *El Cid*, *Spartacus*, *Ivanhoe*, *Jesse James* and *William Tell*.

The Heroic simplicities – not simple-mindedness – of this tradition might have made a more fruitful topic for discussion than *Braveheart*'s adequacy to remote Scottish history. Having established that the intricacies of its period "would tax the skills of a trained historian", McArthur then berates the film for not being up to it either, when for most audiences – Scottish or otherwise – precise historical veracity is of no more concern than the authenticity or otherwise of its representation of mediaeval muck and blood. Does McArthur's attack on "cinematic Dark Ageism" – to be equated in invidiousness, apparently, with sexism, racism and homophobia – mean we can no longer accept with confidence Monty Python's definition of a mediaeval king ("the only one who hasn't got shit all over him")?

Colin McArthur's distinguished contributions to debates over realism and representation are not to be doubted, but it is regrettable that he should fall into a similar trap awaiting historians when they approach cinematic dramatisations of the past (the Western included). Though they may draw their basic material from history, such films should not be judged as history.

North Shields

Surrealism and cliché

From Andre Seewood

In both articles on surrealist film-maker Luis Buñuel, and particularly in *Shocks and Prejudices* (S&S July), there was a major failure in the attempt to understand why Buñuel's reputation and films have fallen out of favour today. The answer was touched upon by Paul Julian Smith when he wrote, "There can be no doubt that we have witnessed a certain banalisation of surrealist technique." But the full exploration of this question and its answer must begin

with Buñuel's and Dali's *Un chien andalou*, the greatest surrealist work in Buñuel's long career, but also the beginning of his downfall, owing to his decision to add a musical soundtrack to his 'incendiary' images. We should remember that the original film was silent. The soundtrack, added in the 1950s, allowed for a certain continuity to be established between the images, but also allowed these shocking images to be easily digested. This marked the end of surrealism proper, and the beginning of surrealism as a commodity. The choice of music is also important: a tango, a popular (not to say clichéd) musical accompaniment even in that time. Thus it is possible to say that Buñuel created the first music video, albeit on film. The tango softened the barbaric and oneiric qualities of the film.

The most exciting cinematic element of today's music videos is the ability effortlessly to switch location, time frame, subject and object at random, the music giving continuity to lip-synched and non-synch images. After adding the musical soundtrack to *Un chien andalou*, Buñuel made it acceptable to break narrative codes without shocking the viewer *ad nauseam*. Years later, Richard Lester's Beatles films could be called 'surrealistic' by taking advantage of the same technique. And many years after that, the music video could commodify and/or commercialise this technique, making *Un chien andalou* seem quaint today.

Finally, I was also dismayed by the glaring omission of Buñuel's most magnificent and disturbing work, *The Young and the Damned* (*Los olvidados*, 1950). May someone please strike a new print of this still relevant and poignant look at juvenile delinquency. It is a film like this that could easily allow today's viewers to see why Buñuel was a master of surrealism, and a genius. Plus it contains no attack on the church, which by now we all know was the cliché of surrealism.

Detroit, U.S.A.

Unpractical reviewing

From Richard Linden

Thanks for printing the wonderful letter by Peter Calder (*Changing the name*) in your August issue. His last sentence – "By the way, did Francke think the movie was any good?" – was a corker. Without in any way detracting from the 'utter fantasticness' of *Sight and Sound*, may I agree that I find reviews such as Francke's unhelpful? Readers, among other things, want to know if a film is worth their while, and there seems to be creeping into more than a few reviews a feeling that all films are worth one's while, which is unpractical on a time basis, and unlikely on an artistic basis. Keep those reviews muscular and opinionated, please!

Victoria, Australia

X-File knowledge

From Gerald Houghton

Otherwise on the money, Jonathan Ross' piece on *The X-Files* does seem a little disingenuous when he tells us that "once or twice the episodes have been a little less than original". His references – *The Thing*, *The Exorcist III* – are accurate, but he seems to misconstrue the motives.

The X-Files is post-modern TV. The production team are not ripping off classic and not-so-classic cinema (God forbid we should call

it homage) but playing on audience's preconceptions and collective knowledge. Those episodes borrowed heartily from the quoted movies: other borrowings were from *Witness*, *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, *Society*, *Terminator 2*, *An American Werewolf in London*, to name but five. And how long before student theses pick up on the references to *The Silence of the Lambs*? Week on week, *The X-Files* visually quotes Demme's film in one way or another. Among the FBI raids and jail interrogations, series-closer *The Erlenmeyer Flask* not only recreates Jodie Foster's search of the storage unit, but even has a lawman tell our redoubtable duo, "I know it's not *The Silence of the Lambs* but it's what we do."

It is notable that Ross should mention *Twin Peaks*. The Lynch/Frost series also played mix-and-match with film history, while several of its main actors have reappeared in *The X-Files*: Michael Horse (a mystical Indian lawman both times), Don Davis (Major Briggs for Lynch; Scully's ghostly Captain father for *X-File* director Chris Carter) and most obviously Fox Mulder himself, David Duchovny. A wry, maverick FBI agent for *The X-Files*, Duchovny of course played a transvestite FBI agent for Lynch. How many of us have bemoaned him not carrying that particular propensity between the two?

Where the unfairly maligned *Twin Peaks* attempted to bring cinematic knowing to television by importing film directors (Lynch, Mark Frost, Diane Keaton, Tim Hunter, Uli Edel, James Foley), *The X-Files* aims not simply to ape but knowingly appropriate from genre cinema. It's all part of the joke, and surely to take the series too seriously is to miss the point by a mile.

All that's needed now is an appearance from David Warner – surely the new Donald Pleasence – and *The X-Files* will have been fully inducted into the canon.

Irthlingborough, Northants

Additions and corrections

The following certificates, running times and lengths were unavailable at time of going to press:

June 1995: *Fun* certificate 18, 9,364 feet, 104 minutes

July 1995: *Country Life* certificate 12, 10,556 feet, 117 minutes; *Ermo* certificate 12, 8,560 feet, 95 minutes; *Who's The Man* certificate 15, 7,990 feet, 88 minutes

August 1995: *Intimate with a Stranger* certificate 18, 8,481 feet, 94 minutes; *Spanking the Monkey* certificate 18, 9,945 feet, 99 minutes; *Suite 16* certificate 18, 9,969 feet, 110 minutes. p.49 *First Knight*: George Gibbs should be credited as Special Effects Supervisor

September 1995: *Jeanne la Pucelle* (the BBFC treats this as two separate films): *Les Batailles* certificate PG, 10,537 feet, 117 minutes, *The Prisons* certificate PG, 10,854 feet, 121 minutes; *The Young Poisoner's Handbook* certificate 15, 8,907 feet, 99 minutes. p.14, acknowledgments, Shu Kei not Shui Kei. p.59, in the credits to *Red Firecracker*, *Green Firecracker*, Gao Yang plays Chief Servant Qiao, not as printed. Tony Rayns wishes to add to his review the following information: "The project was put together and packaged by private companies in Hong Kong and Beijing, who used Xi'an as a production base and provider of staff and clearly saw the film as fitting a perceived space in the international market."

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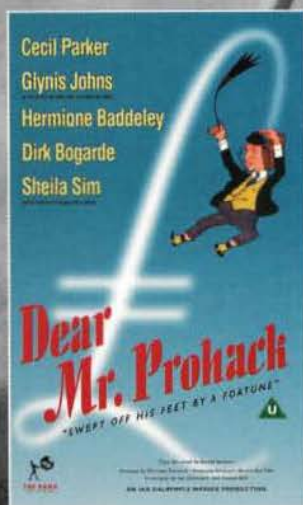
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